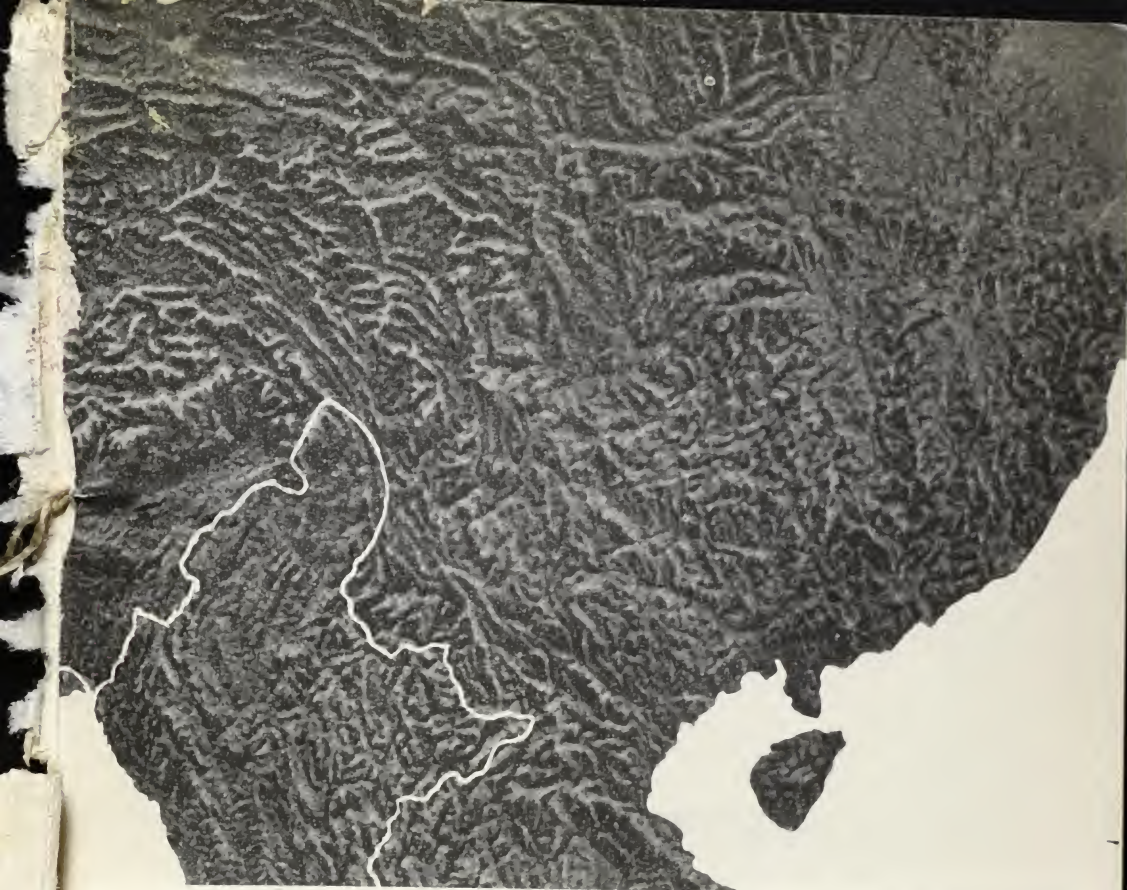




BRANDON UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1984

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S56

Shwe Wa, Maung.

Burma Baptist chronicle. Edited by  
Genevieve Sowards and Erville Sowards.  
Line drawings by E. G. MacColl.  
Rangoon, Board of Publications, Burma  
Baptist Convention, 1963.  
xvi, 448 p. illus. 20 cm.

1. Baptists--Burma. 2. Missions--  
Burma. I. Title

A37170

CCSC 29 JUL 81 595872 CSTMxc 72-18069





Printed at the  
Rangoon University Press,  
Faculty of Social Science Building,  
University Estate, Rangoon, Burma.



BX  
6316  
B9  
S56

# BURMA BAPTIST CHRONICLE

BOOK I by Maung Shwe Wa

BOOK II Edited by  
Genevieve Sowards  
and Erville Sowards

Line Drawings  
by E. G. MacColl

1963  
Board of Publications  
Burma Baptist Convention  
Rangoon

4000 Copies

Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California

Published by U Maung U, No. 0216

Printed by the University Press

Rangoon, 1963





# BURMA BAPTIST CHRONICLE

Judson Sesquicentennial Edition





## DEDICATION

To all those  
whose faith, courage, devotion to duty, and  
sacrifice have helped in the building  
of Christ's Kingdon in Burma  
during the hundred fifty years  
from 1813 to 1963  
this book is gratefully dedicated.

ခရစ်တော်၏ နိုင်ငံတော်

မြန်မာပြည်

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တည်ထောင်နိုင်ရေးအတွက်-နှစ်ပေါင်းတရာ့ငါးဆယ်

(၁၈၁၃ မှ ၁၉၆၃)

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အပေါင်းတို့အား၊

ဤစာအုပ်ဖြင့်-ဂုဏ်ပြုအပ်ပါသည်။

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE present volume, outlining as it does the history of the Baptist Church in Burma during the one hundred and fifty years since its beginning, is a most timely publication as the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the coming of the Judsons to Burma is celebrated in 1963.

Our thanks go to the authors of this Baptist Chronicle, Maung Shwe Wa, author of Book One, and to Rev. and Mrs. Erville E. Sowards and the others who have written individual chapters of Book Two. They have searched and sifted the source material of fifteen decades to provide a background for an understanding and interpretation of the data in the context of conditions prevailing in our times. Their only reward is the satisfaction of a worthy task well done.

Baptist churches in Burma owe their beginnings to Rev. and Mrs. Adoniram Judson who were the very first Protestant missionaries to leave American shores. As a result of their work and that of the early Burmese Christians themselves, the first continuing churches for Burma nationals had their origin.

Baptists of Burma owe a debt of gratitude to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of the Congregational Church for making it possible for these first young missionaries to come to the East, and to American Baptists for having adopted and supported them and nearly eight hundred others during the past century and a half.

The first American groups to begin sharing the Christian gospel with people of other countries, the Congregational and Baptist churches, confronted novel developments and unforeseen problems in carrying the Good News around the globe. Baptists in Burma have pioneered through a hundred and fifty years, marked by very rapid and extensive changes, during which they have contributed to the redrawing of the contours of race rela-



tions, the development of isolated frontier peoples, and the spread of education and social services. The Baptist form of church organization has permitted the Christian groups in the various parts of the country to act freely as guided by their own experience and insights, not being bound by any central ecclesiastical authority.

This chronicle of the development of the church in Burma is a significant chapter in the growth of the world church. Never before has a Baptist history of Burma been written from the point of view of the national church. There are books about individual missionaries and their work, but this book traces the planting and development of the church in Burma during the one hundred and fifty years from its very beginning. The centre of gravity for such a chronicle lies in Burma where this book has been written.

This volume high-lights the transfer of responsibility from the Baptist Mission to the churches of Burma co-operating in the Burma Baptist Convention. With the transfer of responsibility, it is essential that this Convention efficiently co-ordinate the working of the churches, lest dissension enter and destroy the voluntary working unity which has been built up through the years. We hope that this book will help us recall the certainty of our spiritual forefathers as to the adequacy and relevancy of the Gospel, and give an overwhelming sense of mission.

We hope that the unfinished task of the church, which was begun so nobly in 1813 and which is still a venture of uncharted ways in the upheavals of the Far East, will stir us with a burning desire to rededicate ourselves as the Company of the Committed at every level of our lives, as an unconditional response to the Crucified and Risen Lord, as did the Judsons and our spiritual forefathers.

Rev. AYE MYAT KYAW,  
General Secretary  
Burma Baptist Convention.  
Rangoon, July 13, 1963.

Rev. U BA HMYIN,  
Chairman  
Sesquicentennial Celebrations  
Committee.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writers wish to acknowledge their great debt to those mines of information of the first half of the nineteenth century, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission in the Burman Empire* by Ann H. Judson (London 1823), *The Memoirs of Mrs. Ann H. Judson* by James D. Knowles (Boston 1829), *The Lives of the Three Mrs. Judsons* by Arabella Stewart (1852), and the two-volume *Memoir of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.* by Francis Wayland (Boston and London 1853), all now long out of print.

A modern book of great usefulness is Robert G. Torbet's *Venture of Faith*, the history of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies from 1814 to 1954. Another valuable source of material has been Dr. Wallace St. John's *The Baptist Investment in Burma*, an unpublished manuscript which he prepared in 1942, and which the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies have kindly made available. Other useful books are included in the list of literature cited at the end of this chronicle.

The writers owe a debt of gratitude also to Rev. E.C. Starr, Curator of the Samuel Colgate Baptist Historical Library of the American Baptist Historical Society in Rochester, New York, who gave duplicate copies of books and old records, invaluable because Burma was almost swept clear of historical material by the war. The staff of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society now in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, have been very helpful, especially the workers in the General Files and Dr. Hazel F. Shank who has encouraged us in this work.

We wish, too, to express sincere appreciation to Dr. F. G. Dickason, Chairman of the Sesquicentennial Historical Committee and Associate Secretary of the Baptist Board of Publications, for his untiring patience in helping to plan the book and its illustrations, and in seeing it through the press.

The work of writing this book has been largely one of selection and compilation rather than authorship. As far as possible the workmen have been allowed to speak for themselves.

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by Maung Shwe Wa

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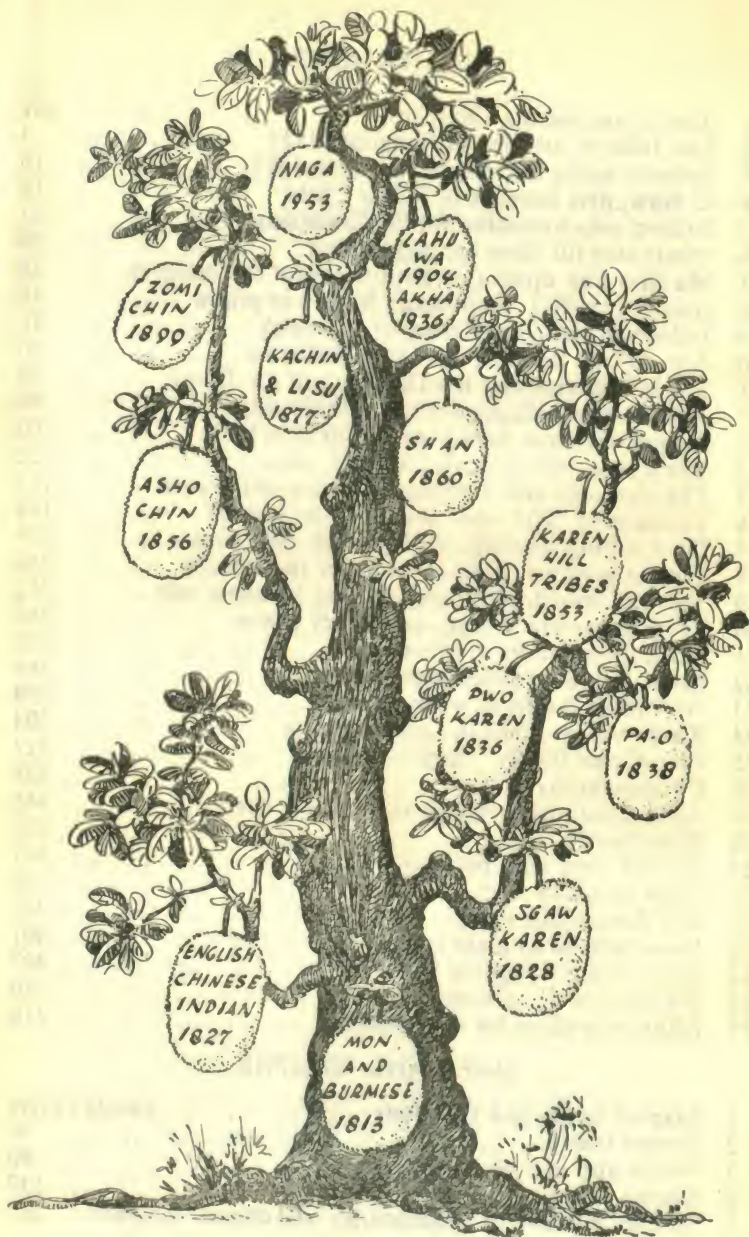
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| 15    | 33    | Read <i>adjoining</i> instead of <i>adoining</i> .  |
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| 65    | 1     | Read <i>arrived</i> instead of <i>arriving</i> .  |
| 79    | 37    | Read 1827 instead of 1824.  |
| 91    | 7     | Read <i>led</i> instead of <i>lead</i> .  |
| 120-1 | 37-1  | Read <i>Howard Malcolm</i> instead of <i>Malcolm Howard</i> .                                       |
| 140   | 33    | Read <i>deferred</i> instead of <i>deferrad</i> .   |
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|       | 35    | Read <i>peddlers</i> instead of <i>pedlers</i> .  |
| 199   | 32    | Read 1899 instead of 1900.  |
| 220   | 2     | Read <i>G.E.Gates</i> instead of <i>F.E.Gates</i> .   |
|       | 33    | Read <i>lead</i> not <i>leed</i> .  |
| 226   | 10    | Read 1940 instead of 1941.  |
|       | 17    | Eliminate the name of <i>U Ba Yin</i> .   |
| 23&24 |       | Read <i>helped in many ways</i> instead of <i>upgraded with a fourth year added to the course</i> . |
|       | 25    | Should read <i>Schools</i> instead of <i>School</i> .   |
| 235   | 24    | Delete <i>where he died in 1922</i> . He died in the USA in 1926.                                   |
| 247   | 7-8   | Brayton Case and Lena Tillman were married in 1917 not 1927.  |
| 269   | 13-14 | Should read, <i>there flowed out a pure river of water of life...</i>                               |
| 289   | 24    | Read <i>J.M. Haswell</i> instead of <i>J.R. Haswell</i> .   |
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| 335   | 1     | Read 1874 not 1847.   |
| 346   | 22    | Read <i>letters</i> instead of <i>lettes</i> .  |
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## BOOK I

# Introducing the Tree of Life on the Banks of the Irrawaddy

A Study of the Planting and Growth  
of the Church in Burma  
1813 - 1963

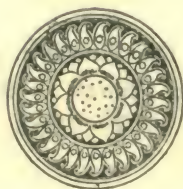
By Maung Shwe Wa

"On either side of the river was the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

—Revelation 22:2

"I want to bring you some spiritual strength, and that means that I shall be strengthened by you, each of us helped by the other's faith."

—Romans 1:12



"I worship God who is worthy of homage, who possesses an intuitive knowledge of good."

Introductory sentence to each of the fourteen books of the *Damathat*, or Laws of Manu.



# Why Burma?

1812 - 1813

**T**HE tramp schooner, *Georgiana*, finally reached the comparatively quiet waters at the mouth of the Rangoon River after a stormy monsoon passage from Madras—a trip which had taken three full weeks. In spite of the heavy drizzle, a young man emerged from the flapping canvas shelter on the afterdeck and eagerly whiffed the land breeze as the creaking ship eased past Elephant Point and picked up a Burmese official from what appeared to be an over-sized canoe. Ann and Adoniram Judson were really reaching Burma at last after having been on the run for months from the British East India Company officials who were dead set against missionaries—to say nothing of American missionaries with whose country Britain was then at war.

**Round The Cape To India.** Mr. and Mrs. Judson had sailed together with Samuel and Harriet Newell from Salem, Massachusetts, on the brig, *Caravan*, on February 19, 1812, the first Americans ever to leave their own country as missionaries of Protestant Christian churches. Their zeal had grown during college and seminary days, inspired by reports of the work of the pioneer English Baptist missionary at Serampore, William Carey, and by a sermon called "The Star of the East" by the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain in the service of the East India Company. Backed by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of the Congregational Church, these two young couples had sailed out onto the war-threatened Atlantic, round the tip of Africa, across the Indian Ocean, past Ceylon and up the east coast of India, arriving in Calcutta June 17th, the day after war had been

declared between Britain and America. There, welcomed by the pioneer English Baptist missionaries at Serampore — Carey, Marshman, and Ward—they found themselves most 'unwelcome to that very East India Company whose chaplain had been in part responsible for turning the eyes of these young missionaries to the east.

**Deportation Orders.** Scarcely a month had passed after their arrival before the Company ordered them to return to America by the same ship on which they had come. The *Caravan* was due to sail within a few days, and they were desperate. Finally, as an alternative, they were allowed to sail for Port Louis, 4000 miles away in the Isle of France (Mauritius), but they were not able to find there any true opportunity for missionary work. After much study and prayer, they determined to go to Penang to settle. Because there was no direct sailing across the Indian Ocean to that port, their passage took them by way of India where they found that not a single ship was scheduled for Penang during the rainy season.

Still having no permit to remain in India, they were soon put under pressure by the Company authorities to leave. In their desperation they were willing to take passage on any ship heading in any direction, rather than be forced to return to America. The only one they found due to sail was the schooner, *Georgiana*, bound for Rangoon in Burma.

But Burma! Judson had earlier been much attracted to Burma after reading Symes' *Embassy to the Court of Ava*, but while in Calcutta he had been told by Dr. Carey that the English Baptist Mission which had been attempted in Rangoon under his son, Felix, and Mr. Chater, had proved anything but a success; that the Burmese people were not permitted to accept a new religion, and that life in Rangoon was most precarious and difficult. The foreign population the year before had had to take refuge for fifty days on a British frigate in the Rangoon harbour. (1939 Pearn 105).

It is true that their Mission Board had not given the Judsons definite instructions where to begin work, simply directing them to "Asia, either in the Burman Empire, or in Surat (India), or in



the Prince of Wales Island (Penang), or elsewhere as ...Providence shall open the most favourable door." (1853a Wayland 57). For a whole year they had been knocking at doors which were opened a crack and then shut in their faces. Now, with the East India Company pressing them to leave India, this one door to Burma seemed to be ajar. Whether it, too, would be closed to them they could not tell, but at least God seemed to have blockaded roads to every other place.

**Monsoon Crossing To Burma.** So, though dissuaded by all their Christian friends in Madras, Ann and Adoniram embarked June 22, 1813, on the *Georgiana*. They were assigned to a canvas shelter on deck as there were no cabins on this fine ocean liner. Since the monsoon had begun in full force, the canvas shelter was poor protection from the driving rain and spray. Ann was soon taken so seriously ill that Adoniram despaired of her life. She lost her first baby with only a young and inexperienced husband to help her. Fortunately for them the storms blew their ship into the dangerous but quiet strait between the Little and Great Andaman Islands not far from the Burma coast. The quiet brought immediate relief to Ann, and from that moment she began to mend. But she was scarcely able to sit up that morning of July 12th as their ship picked up its pilot at the mouth of the Rangoon River.

All day they went up river, first against the current and then with the incoming tide. On either side were tangles of mangrove swamp, with here and there small riverside villages backed by paddy fields. Late in the afternoon they passed the town of Syriam on their right. Ahead and to the left Adoniram caught a breath-taking view through breaks in the rain, of the great golden Shwe Dagon Pagoda. It was dusk before the *Georgiana* tied up at what appeared to be the only jetty extending out from the high muddy shore into the dangerous and swiftly running current. Ann being asleep, Adoniram went ashore to see what he could of their future home.

The rain had come on again, making the roads along the river front seas of mud; dark rain trees spread their wide branches out across the lanes making them even darker and harder to



negotiate. In the growing darkness no Burman noticed him; only the dogs sensed his foreignness and set up their barking at his heels. If Judson had expected Rangoon to be another Calcutta, Madras, or Port Louis, he quickly learned better. After wandering about for awhile within the stockade, the gates of which were already tightly shut, he retraced his steps to the jetty, splattered with mud almost to the knees.

Back in the canvas shelter, with the rain drumming down outside, Adoniram reported to Ann on what he had found. Never in their year and a half of incessant travelling from place to place had they been so gloomy and depressed, but during their evening prayers they commended themselves sincerely and without reserve to the disposal of their Heavenly Father. They were soon to experience something of that peace which our Saviour gives to his followers.

The Judsons' search for a place to begin their mission work had ended; Burma had opened her door just wide enough for them to squeeze in. They had arrived in the country where they were to spend the rest of their lives.

*The Judsons arriving in Rangoon on July 13, 1813.*



## 2 Burmese - from Palm Leaf and Lip

1813 - 1817

**W**HETHER the door opened to the Judsons in Rangoon would remain open, they could not be sure. Next morning Ann was carried in a chair from the customs house out through the stockade wall by the Execution Gate which was located just about where Immanuel Baptist Church now stands.

The Judsons became aware of the beauty and charm of the bamboo and thatch houses under fruiting coconut palms. About the houses were chickens whose bright red plumage indicated their near relationship to the wild red jungle fowl so common in Burma—the ancestor of all of today's domesticated chicken breeds. Mango trees, whose trunks were festooned with dripping clumps of orchids and ferns, rose to giant heights on spots of higher ground. Along the tidal creeks, bamboo clumps of half a dozen different kinds lifted their giant stalks.

As the little procession threaded the muddy paths outside the stockade wall, numbers of curious children followed, laughing and gay. They were joined now and then by a more curious adult. Ann, responding to the tropical beauty and lushness about her, smiled at the braver children who ventured near enough. How long, she wondered, would it be till she could begin to understand what they were saying and be able to tell them the stories of Jesus.

**Destination Reached.** About a half mile from the stockade wall, in the quarter which today would be located on Barr Street to the rear of the Bible Society building, the little cavalcade turned in at the gate of the mission house which had been built by the English missionaries, Chater and Felix Carey. We can



imagine their excitement as they went along the path through the two-acre garden filled with fruit trees so strange to their American eyes. Soon their attention was turned to the rambling mission house high on stilts, visible through the trees, and to the woman and children coming down the long stairs to meet them. This woman was the wife of Felix Carey, of Portuguese-Burmese extraction, whom Felix had married after coming to Burma. Unfortunately for the new arrivals, Felix was away in the capital city of Ava, some 350 miles up the broad Irrawaddy River. Mrs. Carey, however, was all kindness as she welcomed the new missionaries and made them feel at home with true Burmese hospitality. The house was of ample size to accommodate them all; as a matter of fact, after their cramped and wet quarters on the deck of the *Georgiana*, this place seemed almost like heaven itself.

And they were really in Burma. They had been allowed to come ashore, and now they had found shelter in a friendly house. What a wonderful feeling after their months of flight from one place to another! It was not long before the good rice and curry, with bananas and mangoes, brought back colour to Ann's cheeks and strength to her body.

**Orientation Begins.** Adoniram was all business: the study of the Burmese language was his first and great assignment. Fortunately for him, he was able to secure the services of an excellent teacher, a very learned man who had formerly been a priest at the court of Ava. He had a thorough knowledge of the construction of the Burmese language, likewise of *Pali*, the learned language of the country. There were handwritten palm leaf books available for study.

The language study aids at the Judson's disposal were few: six chapters of the Gospel of Matthew by Mr. Carey, and a small part of a Burmese grammar and dictionary. (1833 Knowles 128). The newcomers met with difficulties of which they had no idea before beginning the work, for Burmese modes of expression and thought were very different from those of the young Americans. The letters and root words were entirely different from those they knew. The words were run together



in one long line or paragraph without spaces between words, and with little punctuation. The language used the tonal system: modulations of voice which, in western languages, express astonishment, disbelief, question, and alarm, become in Burmese a means of distinguishing between words of different meaning. The thirty or more meanings which a slight difference of accentuation or aspiration may give to an otherwise identical sound, indicates the difficulty which the Judsons met in learning the language, and the ease with which they might say what they did not at all mean. They found that it was necessary to learn the language more by ear than by eye.

After nine months of daily language study from "monks'-early - morning - eating - time" to "children-go-to-bed-time", Judson could say, "Our progress in the language is slow; we can, however, read, write, and converse with tolerable ease, and frequently spend whole evenings pleasantly conversing with Burmese friends."

Ann, with her strength returned, took entire management of the house so that her husband could have his full time free for language study. After a year of this, she found that she could talk and understand others better than Mr. Judson, though he knew much more about the nature and construction of the language.

Along with her language and household chores, Ann took time to make friends in the community, even forming quite a warm attachment for the wife of the spear-bearing viceroy of Rangoon, Mya-day-min. Ann was usually reserved and serious in the great lady's presence, yet manifested a tender concern for her welfare with which she was much pleased. The friendship of these two women continued through the years and may have contributed to the uniformly fair treatment that the Judsons received from the government, the war years in Ava excepted.

After eighteen months Judson found that he still did not have enough mastery of Burmese to be able to explain intelligibly the teachings of Christ. But the time was not being wasted, for along with the knowledge of the language, he and

Ann were learning the poetry, the folkways, the forms of thought, the beliefs, culture, and customs of Burmese life. As pointed out by a Burmese minister, "Your customs and ours are completely opposite in so many points: you write on white, we on black paper; you stand up, we sit down; you uncover your head, we our feet in token of respect." (1956 Maung Maung 45).

This period of training and orientation enabled them to avoid the unfortunate results of ignorance and mistaken presumptions alien to the thought and life of the Burmese people.

In the middle of the hot season of 1815, Ann described her husband at language study: "Could you look into the verandah, you would see Mr. Judson bent over his table, with his teacher at his side, a venerable looking man in his sixtieth year."

About July of that year this teacher left and Judson was able to secure the services of U (for uncle) Aung Min then forty-seven years old. Judson described him as "the most sensible, learned, and candid man that I have ever found among the Burmans." (1853a Wayland 134). Judson undertook, with the aid of this new teacher, the study of the Burmese classical language, *Pali*, and the preparation of a Pali-Burmese Dictionary of 4000 words, as well as a Burmese-English Dictionary. Judson hesitated to spend so much time at this work, but the constant occurrence of Pali terms in every Burmese book made it absolutely necessary. Many words in common use, and a great proportion of theological terms, he found to be of Pali origin.

With this task completed by January 1816, Judson was again able to devote his whole time to Burmese. He was able to say at this time, "I now begin to see my way forward in this language, and hope that two or three more years will make it somewhat familiar; but I have met with difficulties that I had no idea of before I entered the work ... I once had occasion to devote about two months to the study of French. I have now been engaged above two years in the study of Burman, but if I were to choose between a Burman and French book to be examined in, without previous study, I should, without hesitation, choose the French."



Judson continued the study of the Burmese language all his life, but his more formal study ended in early 1820 when his teacher returned to Ava.

**First Books Printed In Burmese.** Judson combined with his Burmese study, at as early a period as possible, the work of translation and preparation of Christian literature, thus beginning the second phase of the preparatory work for planting the church in Burma. In January 1816 he began to translate the New Testament since he was extremely anxious to get some part of the Scripture into intelligible shape to read to the Burmans he met with. He also began to write a tract.

Though suffering at this time from severe eyestrain and headache, Judson systematized his knowledge of the Burmese language in a grammar so that the findings of his study might be made available to others. After about 150 years people are still using this book, a fact which indicates its essential accuracy. A reviewer in the *Calcutta Review* in 1842 called this grammar "another work which indicates the genius of the man perhaps more than anything else except his Bible ... We have seen no work in any language which we would compare with it for brevity and completeness." (1853a Wayland 12).

In August 1816 Judson wrote, "The language is considerably acquired, a tract is ready for publication which will give the Burmans their first ideas of a Saviour and the way of salvation; a grammar is finished... and a dictionary of the language is in a very forward state; and the way is now prepared, as soon as health permits, to proceed slowly in the translation of the New Testament." (1853a Wayland 142).

The production of Christian literature entered a new phase after the arrival in August of a printing press and Burmese type, a gift of the English Baptist missionaries at Serampore. In October the first missionary printer, George H. Hough, arrived to operate the new press. A year earlier Felix Carey had brought a press from Calcutta for King Bodaw-paya, but this had been lost when the boat carrying it up the Irrawaddy River capsized in a storm. In the same accident, Felix lost his wife and children.



Early 1817 saw the first examples of Burmese printing to come from a press in Burma. These included a thousand copies of a 7-page pamphlet, *A View of the Christian Religion*, in which the doctrines and duties of the Christian faith were clearly stated. The second was a 6-page *Catechism* whose questions and answers presented the essentials of Christian belief. The third was an 800-copy edition of the Gospel of Matthew which Judson and his teacher prepared, working hard to keep ahead as Mr. Hough printed it.

**The Mission Begins To Enlarge.** The arrival of the Houghs as the second missionary family presented certain new problems as the two couples organized the first Baptist church in Burma in November 1816, and as they divided responsibilities between them. They thought it likely that the king would shortly order Hough to take the printing press to Ava where he could begin Christian work in the capital itself. They saw the need for additional missionary staff and money to finance the coming expansion. The printing, too, would require funds. Therefore Judson sent a letter to the Mission Board in August 1816 which said, "Men and money must be forthcoming. Work cannot be done without men, and men cannot work without bread; nor can we expect the ravens to feed them in ordinary cases. My request I think modest. Five men, allowing two or three to each station, is the smallest number that will possibly answer."

This plea for more staff and money—the first of dozens of such requests during subsequent years—was followed up in November 1816 by Judson's description of the kind of person most suited for mission work:

"In encouraging other young men to come out as missionaries, do use the greatest caution. One wrong-headed, conscientiously obstinate fellow would ruin us. Humble, quiet, persevering men; men of sound sterling talents (though perhaps not brilliant), of decent accomplishments, and some natural aptitude to acquire a language; men of amiable, yielding temper, willing to take the lowest place, to be the least of all and the servant of all; men who enjoy much closet religion, who live near to

God, and are willing to suffer all things for Christ's sake, without being proud of it; these are the men (we need)." (1853a Wayland 146).

**First Stage Completed.** So it was that by 1817 the Judsons had completed their orientation period, the Baptist Mission had been established in Burma, and the call had gone out for more men and funds with which to meet the opportunities and challenges of the second stage of the development of the church in this land.

### 3 "We Resolved to Preach the Gospel, not Anti-Buddhism."

1817-1818

**J**OHN Milton has said, "If you try to do before you are, the result is disaster." For a period of four years the missionaries had spent their whole time in preparation; now the time had come for them to begin to do the work for which they had come to Burma.

**Articles Of Agreement.** As a guide to themselves, the Judsons and the Houghs drew up articles of agreement which included the following points:

"We agree in the opinion that our sole object on earth is to introduce the religion of Jesus into the Empire of Burma. The means by which we hope to effect this are,

- 1) translating, printing, and distributing the Holy Scriptures,
- 2) preaching the Gospel,
- 3) circulating religious tracts, and
- 4) promoting the instruction of native children."

By 1817 a beginning had been made in translating and printing the Bible and in preparing tracts, but up to that time there had been little distribution of literature and no public preaching. Preparations were now completed to begin this second stage of public ministry.

**First Discussions On Religion.** The first person with whom Judson discussed religion was his own teacher or *sayā*, U Aung Min. Such discussions arose quite naturally while they were working together on vocabulary and translation. In talking of life and death, of the Eternal God and man's soul, of salvation and how to achieve it, U Aung Min gained insight into the Christian faith, and Judson learned how to present Christian teaching in a form comprehensible to the Burmese mind.



On March 7, 1817, Judson was visited by Maung Zah, the first inquirer after religion who had come of his own accord. Judson had talked with many people, but those conversations had always been at his initiative. In this instance Judson was sitting with his teacher when a Burman of respectable appearance came up the steps and sat down by him. After some casual conversation, the visitor surprised Judson by asking, "How long will it take me to learn the religion of Jesus?"

Judson replied that such a question could not be answered. If God gave light and wisdom, the religion of Jesus was soon learned; but, without God, a man might study all his life and make no progress. On inquiry, Judson learned that his visitor's question had been prompted by his having read the two tracts which had recently come off the press. He seemed to be much moved by their contents, saying, "This is the true God; this is the right way!" At his urgent request for further material to read, Judson folded the first two sheets off the press of the Gospel of Matthew and gave them to him. He then departed after receiving an invitation to return again.

Such experiences strengthened Judson's conviction that he could not preach publicly to any advantage without being able, at the same time, to put some Christian writing in the hands of the listeners. With this feeling of urgency, he worked long hours to complete the translation of the Gospel of Matthew, planning after this was finished, to start a more public communication of the Gospel.

**Obstacles To Public Preaching.** The mission house was located in the large fruit garden half a mile outside the stockade, away from any neighbours, and a considerable distance back from the road. In that isolated situation few visitors and no passing travellers could be invited to stop and hear of Christ. Judson began to feel the need of a small house nearer town, on some public road. He wrote to the Mission Board about this need.

In the garden location they continued through the rest of 1817. The few who visited them were afraid of public ostracism

and official disapproval. Even U Aung Min was threatened in public for having assisted the foreigner in making books about the new religion. He replied that he merely taught the language and had no concern in the publications.

Under these circumstances, Judson considered that it would be prudent to approach the king himself, before he began what might be considered as trespassing on his royal rights. If the king should grant his patronage, or treat the missionaries with complacency or even with indifference, it would be a great point gained. No local government would dare to persecute the followers of the new religion if they had friends at court.

**A Costly Interruption.** Both the appeal to Ava and the beginning of a more active public ministry were delayed while Judson went to Arakan on the west coast of Burma to try to find a Burmese-speaking Arakanese Christian to assist him in his first public efforts. Unfortunately the sailing vessel on which he had taken passage on December 25, 1817, was blown completely out of its course by unseasonable storms. It drifted helpless for three months, very short of water and food. When Judson was finally put ashore in India, he was a mere skeleton.

After a short period to regain strength, he was carried three hundred miles by chair to Madras where he hoped to find a ship bound for Rangoon; but with a war-scare on in Rangoon, few ships were venturing in that direction. It was not till the middle of the rains in August 1818 that Judson got back to Rangoon after an absence of eight months. During the first seven months of that period there had been no word in Rangoon of the ship on which he had departed, and it was presumed lost with all passengers on board.

During these months Mrs. Judson and the Houghs were having a most difficult time themselves. Cholera was raging in Rangoon, with people dying on every side. Mr. Hough was arrested and detained at the court house on the most flimsy charges, being released only when Ann appealed directly to the viceroy.

Rumours were spreading of an impending war between Burma and India, and all English vessels were leaving Rangoon



hurriedly. The Houghs sailed for Bengal with the printing presses, but Ann decided to stay on, no matter how great the danger, trusting that her husband was still alive, and that somehow, sometime, he would return. Within a week of her decision to stay, Mr. Judson arrived! We can imagine their profound joy at being safely together again.

**New Missionaries Arrive.** War did not break out at that time, and gradually conditions returned to normal. On the 19th September two new mission families arrived, the Colmans and the Wheelocks. Judson records that they were "four *lovely* persons, in every sense of the word, who appear to have much of a humble, prayerful spirit." (1853a Wayland 155). Unfortunately it turned out that both the men had tuberculosis and therefore were able to give only a few years of service. Nevertheless, in the absence of the Houghs, they were to be of great help in the work. Judson introduced them to the viceroy who received them with marked attention. On being told that the new teachers wished to "take refuge in his glory" and remain in Rangoon, he replied, "Let them stay, let them stay; and let your wife bring their wives that I may see them all."

**The Zayat is Opened.** Now that Mr. Judson was back and settled in Rangoon again, he began at once to build a *zayat*, after the Burmese fashion, located on land adjoining the mission house and fronting on a main road leading to the great Pagoda. This building was 18 × 27 feet and had three sections: the first a verandah thatched with *dani* leaves and open to the road, the place where Mr. Judson would sit and receive all occasional visitors and inquirers. The second or middle section was a large airy room with whitewashed board walls to be used on Sundays for preaching and on weekdays for adult literacy classes, and also where Ann could talk with women inquirers. The last section was a mere entry opening into the garden adjoining the mission house which was some 200 yards distant. (1833 Knowles 179).

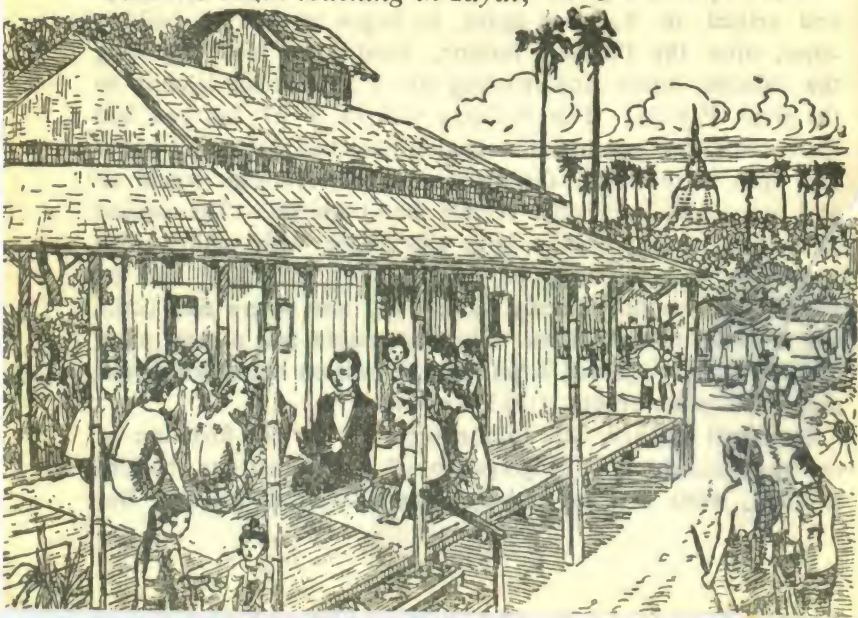
On April 4, 1819, Mr. Judson preached for the first time in the new *zayat* to a congregation of fifteen persons besides children, most of them entirely inattentive and disorderly. But



feeble as was this beginning of public preaching, it must be regarded as an event of no ordinary importance. Here was the first altar erected in Burma for the worship of the Eternal and Everlasting God. Plain and simple as were its walls compared with the magnificent pagodas that surrounded it it was perhaps the fitter emblem of that spiritual religion which delights not in temples made with hands, but in the service of the heart.

**First Burman To Follow Christ.** During the month that followed the opening of the zayat, a number of curious visitors from Rangoon and the nearby villages of Kambe, Tadagale, and Kyaikasan—now all suburbs of Rangoon—came to the zayat, but only one or two seemed to be sincerely interested. On the last day of the month a quiet and reserved young man, Maung (for younger brother) Naw, stopped to talk for several hours. His quietness was such that he did not at first attract much of Judson's attention, but after daily visits for a week, Judson began to think that the grace of God had reached his heart.

Maung Naw expressed repentance for his sins and faith in the Saviour. The substance of his profession was that, from darkness and uncleanness, and sins of his whole life, he had  
*Judsons begin teaching in zayat, 1819*



found no other Saviour but Jesus Christ. He could look nowhere else for salvation, and therefore he proposed to adhere to Christ, and worship him all his life long. (1853a Wayland 171.)

To the young missionaries it seemed almost too much to believe that God had begun to manifest his grace to the Burmans, but that day they could not resist the delightful conviction that this was really the case.

Maung Naw proved to be teachable, humble in spirit, ready to believe all that Christ had said, and to obey all that he had commanded. He was of middling abilities, quite poor and obliged to work for a living by bringing logs down the river to Rangoon. Soon, however, he was helping Judson explain points of Christian faith to newcomers. He regretted the lack of a believing Burman associate, but declared his determination to adhere to Christ though no Burman should ever join him.

By the middle of May, Maung Naw was anxious to be received into the Christian fellowship and thought it a great privilege to be the first among the Burmans to profess the religion of Jesus Christ. He had been told plainly that he had nothing to expect in this world but persecution and perhaps death; but he thought it better to die for Christ, and be happy hereafter, than to live a few days and be forever wretched.

On June 6th Maung Naw wrote a letter asking for baptism. This read in part: "I, Maung Naw, believe that the divine Son of God, Jesus Christ, suffered death in the place of men to atone for their sins. Like a heavy-laden man, I feel my sins are very many. The punishment of my sins I deserve to suffer. Since it is so, do you, sirs, consider that I, taking refuge in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving baptism, in order to become his disciple, shall dwell one with yourselves, a band of brothers, in the happiness of heaven, and therefore grant me the ordinance of baptism ... It is only since I have met with you, sirs, that I have known about the Eternal God, and I venture to pray that you will still unfold to me the religion of God, that my old disposition may be destroyed and my new disposition improved." (1853a Wayland 175). The missionaries, being satisfied of the reality of his faith, voted to receive him into the church fellowship on his being baptized the following Sunday.



The baptism was delayed, however, because Rangoon was thrown into great confusion over the reported death of King Bodaw-paya who had reigned since 1782. Order after order reached the Rangoon Viceroy to return to Ava with all troops fully armed. Judson recorded: "The whole place is sitting in sullen silence, expecting an explosion. About 10 o'clock on June 22nd a royal dispatch boat pulled up to the shore. An imperial mandate was produced: 'Listen ye. The immortal king, wearied, it would seem, with the fatigues of royalty, has gone to amuse himself in the celestial regions. His grandson, the heir apparent (Bagyidaw), is seated on the throne. The young monarch enjoins all to remain quiet and wait his imperial orders.' " (1853a Wayland 176).

Just five days after this, following the usual Lord's Day service, Judson called Maung Naw before him, read and commented on an appropriate passage of scripture, asked him several questions concerning his *faith, hope, and love*, and made the baptismal prayer, having concluded to have all the preparatory exercises done in the *zayat*. They then proceeded up Pagoda Road to a large pond in the vicinity (probably just to the east of where *U Naw first Burman to follow Christ, 1819*





the Scot's Kirk now stands), and there administered baptism to the first Burman convert.

**The Judsons' Own Baptism.** Great as was this experience for Maung Naw as he dedicated his life to Christ, it was doubly meaningful for young Adoniram Judson and his wife. Full as their hearts were of praise to God for this first fruit of the kingdom of God in Burma, their minds must have inevitably turned back to their own baptism as adults in the Lall Bazaar Baptist Church in Calcutta on September 6, 1812, shortly after their arrival in India when they, wanting to obey Christ's commands to the fullest, had asked for baptism as adult believers. They had grown up in families of the Congregational Christian faith in which their parents had them baptized in their infancy when the choice was not theirs and when they knew nothing about it.

Their study of the Bible during the long sea voyage from America to India had persuaded them that the New Testament taught that only those who believed in Christ should be baptized. They chose to be buried with Christ in baptism that they, too, might walk in newness of life.

The price they had paid for this act of obedience was high, for they were separated from their friends and sending churches. For many months they were without support until the Baptist churches in America heard of their situation and formed a Missionary Convention in 1814 to provide the necessary backing.

So Judson did not lightly baptize this first Burman convert: he knew the cost of obedience which was sure to bring hardship and suffering to Maung Naw. But this same obedience brought him the love of Christ which was sufficient for his every need. In the history of the church in Burma, Maung Naw will always be honoured for his courageous faith and unselfish obedience. After World War II when the Lanmadaw Baptist Church building in Rangoon was rebuilt on its original site, it was renamed in honour of this young man who could find no other Saviour but Jesus Christ, and who literally risked his very life to follow him. He is now affectionately remembered as U Naw or Uncle Naw.

**U Ing, Second Burman Convert.** As summer follows

springtime, so surely did the harvest follow the opening of the zayat with its periods of teaching and preaching, its long hours of question and answer, and the flow of Gospel portions and pamphlets explaining Christ's precepts. The "surface tension" which had been separating the Christian and Buddhist ways of thought had been reduced, and the relative impenetrability of Burmese culture and religion by the Christian witness had been lessened.

Maung Ing, the second Burman convert (though the eleventh to be baptized), came to the zayat on August 31st after hearing the followers of the famous Tsalen Sayadaw discussing one of Judson's tracts. He was a fisherman from Mergui (then called Bike), of rough and unprepossessing appearance, whose father was Portuguese. He had gained some idea of an Eternal God from his Burmese mother who had been christened as a Catholic.

At first he talked mostly with Maung Naw and read the Gospel of Matthew. He told Maung Naw that he had long been searching for true religion. Within a few days he began to pray and became quite conscious of his sins and the inadequacy of religion as he had known it. Three days later he said, "When I meditate on this religion, I know not what it is to love my own life." A week later Maung Ing had to leave on his fishing ship for five months, a believer but not yet baptized. Such was the conversion of one of the sturdy leaders of the early church about whom much more is to be recorded.

Maung Tha Hla and Maung Pye were to become the second and third members of the church before the end of 1819. The former had been living in the mission compound for several months, so he had ample chance to visit the zayat and listen to the discussions going on there. He and Maung Naw became close friends. Before long he took the lead in explaining Christian truth to newcomers. He may be remembered as the first Burman to have a Christian wedding, and as the disciple who went to bring his close relative, Maung Shwe Bay, to Christ. Unfortunately this promising young man died of cholera two years later.

Maung Pye and his family were near neighbours of the mission

group. He joined an adult literacy class which Ann taught in the evening in the zayat. With his reading he also learned of Christ's love. Though very legalistic in his outlook, depending on *karma* and meritorious works, he soon learned that Christ's merit is sufficient for the needs of all men and that it could be transferred to him.

He and Maung Tha Hla were baptized at dusk on November 7, 1819, in the same tank where Maung Naw had been baptized. This time, however, there were no curious watchers on the hill to the west. At the time, feelings were tense, and the young church felt it prudent not to call unnecessary attention to itself. During the festival of lights which had just taken place, with thousands of visitors from the districts, they had even kept the zayat closed as it seemed likely that the preaching of the new religion at that special festival would be likely to incense the government and draw such persecution as might deter all interested people from continuing their inquiry. But in spite of this, the young church was beginning to grow as surely as seeds in a paddy nursery.



## 4 Communicating the Gospel to Intellectuals

1819-1820

**D**URING the year following the baptism of Maung Naw, and at the same time that Maung Pye and Maung Tha Hla were turning to Christ, Judson was challenged and stimulated by a number of highly educated Burmans. They lived in Nandawgon and Pazundaung villages located to the east of the city stockade, i.e., just beyond the present old Secretariat and Government Printing Office.

This Nandawgon group included Dr. U Yan who had a very acute and discriminating mind; Ma Min Lay who was the first Burmese woman to become a Christian, her husband, Maung Myat Lah, and her sister Ma Mya Gale; also Ma Doke, Maung Yo, and U Tha Aye who later became the first pastor of the Burmese Baptist Church.

**U Shwe Ngong's Pilgrimage.** The leader of this group was U Shwe Ngong of Pazundaung. His first contact with the zayat was on August 26, 1819, just about a month after Maung Naw's baptism. Fifty-one years of age, he was a teacher of learning and influence. Unlike the other Burmans with whom Judson had talked, this saya was a Buddhist in form only, being in belief half deist and half sceptic. But since Judson himself had gone through the stage of deistic belief in his college days, he was quite prepared to understand U Shwe Ngong's conviction that there was a divine wisdom which was the true and only god. This wisdom was not concentrated in any existing spirit, nor embodied in any form, but diffused throughout the universe, and partaken in various degrees by different intelligences.

Judson and U Shwe Ngong talked from noon till dark. The

visitor showed himself to be highly intelligent and a master at argument. Judson felt that he had failed to make any real impression on his proud and sceptical heart, but before departing, U Shwe Ngong promised to pray to the Eternal God through Jesus Christ, and appeared to leave in a very thoughtful mood. This may be considered to be U Shwe Ngong's first step on his journey of faith to Christ.

On September 3rd U Shwe Ngong was present at the zayat with several of his followers from ten o'clock till quite dark. He and Judson seemed to get nowhere in their discussion, but after his adherents had left, he talked with considerable feeling, saying that he knew nothing, and asking Judson to instruct him. Before he left, he prostrated himself before Judson—an act which a Burman performs only to an acknowledged superior.

U Shwe Ngong spent all of September 11th in the zayat. Judson learned that eight years before, he had accidentally obtained the idea of an Eternal Being and that this had been bothering him ever since. When he heard of Judson, through one of his tracts, this idea received considerable confirmation. On this day he fully admitted the truth of this first grand principle—the second step on his Christian pilgrimage.

The next Lord's day, U Shwe Ngong and some of his acquaintances attended the worship service where about fifty were gathered. Afterwards the teacher stayed on as usual till dark. Just before he left he confessed that he felt compelled to give up all dependence on his own merits and his literary attainments; that he had sinned against God all his life long, and that therefore he deserved to suffer hell. He then asked Judson how he could obtain an interest in the merits and salvation of Jesus Christ. Seemingly he was taking a third step on the straight and narrow way. Should this man of such powerful reasoning, superior talents, and extensive knowledge of Burmese and Pali literature be converted, he would be of incalculable help to the young church. He might become a second Paul.

Perhaps U Shwe Ngong realized that he was going pretty

far: for several weeks he carefully avoided all conversation with Judson of a personal nature, and seemed to be settling back in his deistic faith. It was not till October 7th that he ventured back for another day of argument and exchange of views. Judson was able to give him a rather complete understanding of the atonement. Before leaving, U Shwe Ngong exclaimed, "That is suitable, that is as it should be!"

Following this visit, the two men did not meet again for a fortnight. During this period Judson heard that the ecclesiastical head, the Mangen Sayadaw, had mentioned to the viceroy that U Shwe Ngong had renounced the religion of the country. The viceroy issued no decisive orders, only saying to inquire further. Had it not been for the friendship between Ann and the Viceroy's wife, it is possible his order might have been much more severe. U Shwe Ngong went to call on the Sayadaw, but what was said was never revealed. Nevertheless, U Shwe Ngong's interest in the Christian religion seemed to cool considerably.

All this happened just before Maung Pye and Maung Tha Hla were baptized in semi-private in order to avoid public resentment. It was at this same time that the Mangen Sayadaw ordered the Judsons to stop riding horseback near the pagoda.

It was not till more than a month later that U Shwe Ngong again ventured to the zayat. After hours of philosophical hairsplitting, he proceeded to say that he really did believe in God, in his son Jesus Christ, and in the atonement. Judson, knowing his deistical weakness of not accepting divine revelation, asked him, "Do you believe all that is contained in the book of Matthew that I have given you? In particular, do you believe that the Son of God died on the cross?"

"Ah," he replied, "you have caught me now. I believe that he suffered death, but I cannot admit that he suffered the shameful death of the cross."

"Therefore," replied Judson, "you are not a disciple of Christ. A true disciple inquires not whether a fact is agreeable to his reason, but whether it is in the book. Teacher, your pride is still unbroken. Break down your pride, and yield to the word of God."



To this, U Shwe Ngong thoughtfully replied, "As you utter those words, I see my error. I have been trusting in my own reason, not in the word of God. This day is different from all other days on which I have visited you; I now believe the crucifixion of Christ because it is contained in the Scripture." He went on to say, "I love Jesus Christ; no one who really knows him can help loving him." U Shwe Ngong had taken his fourth step along the new Way.

**An Attempt To Get The King's Support.** Visitors had ceased to come to the zayat ever since U Shwe Ngong had been accused before the viceroy. Judson sometimes sat there a whole day without a single person stopping. The disciples and missionaries decided that they must appeal to the new king, Bagyidaw, for without his approval it seemed likely that missionary efforts within his empire would be out of the question.

Ann was eager to accompany the delegation to the capital because her friend, the wife of the old viceroy, was then at Ava and was sure to give her a favourable reception. Mya-day-min was then next in rank to the king and had the management of all the affairs of the kingdom. But Mr. Judson, remembering the loss of Felix Carey's whole family, thought the trip too hazardous, with the added danger of armed bandits along much of the way. Besides, no foreign woman had ever appeared at court.

So, leaving Ann behind, but accompanied by the new missionary, Mr. Colman, and Maung Naw, Judson embarked on December 21, 1819, in a large armed canoe for the 350-mile trip up the Irrawaddy River to Ava. They arrived safely on January 25th, having carried with them a gift for the king consisting of a six-volume edition of the Bible. Each volume was decorated in the Burmese style with gold leaf and enclosed in a rich wrapper.

With the help of Mya-day-min and one of his officers, Maung Zah, Judson and Colman were next day conducted to the palace. There they soon discovered that they had come at an unfavourable time, since it was the day when the recent Burmese victory over the Kathays was to be celebrated. At the very time of their

arrival, His Majesty was scheduled to watch the display prepared for the occasion. All they could do was to try to catch his attention as he passed through the many-pillared hall.

Sure enough, as he strode along, he caught sight of the two westerners and stopped to ask their business. Appearing to be pleased with their answers, he took his place on the elevated dais and listened while Maung Zah read the missionaries' petition which asked that they might preach their religion in his dominions, and that those who wished to listen to, and be guided by, this preaching, whether foreigners or Burmans, might be exempted from government molestation.

The king re-read the petition without comment and was then handed a tract. This he held long enough to read the first two sentences which asserted that there is one eternal God, who is independent of incidents and mortality, and that besides him there is no other God. Then with an air of disdain, he dashed the tract to the ground. Maung Zah made an effort to save them by unwrapping one of the gift Bibles, but the king took no notice. Their fate was decided.

After a few moments, Maung Zah interpreted his master's will in the following terms: "Why do you ask for such permission? Have not the Portuguese, the English, the Mussulmans, and people of all other religions, full liberty to practice and worship according to their custom? In regard to the object of your petition, his majesty gives no order. In regard to your sacred books, his majesty has no use for them: take them away."

The Christian embassy to Ava had failed: they knew that there would be no toleration for any Burman subject who embraced a religion different from that of the king. Yet, disappointed as they were, they believed that what had just happened was within the will of their Heavenly Father who had overruled their desire in this present case, and whose purpose, could they but know it, would call forth their highest praise.

Later it was discovered that the king had been influenced against Judson and Colman by the report of a Portuguese priest who had told the king that these foreigners were members of the *Zandi* sect which had been very obnoxious to former

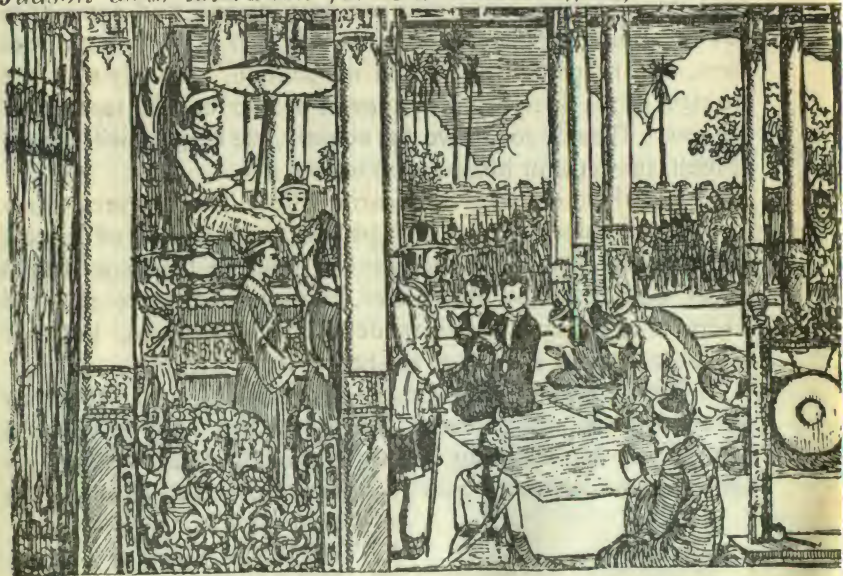


emperors. (1823 Judson 240). Sangermano (1885, 89) refers to these people as *Zodi* saying that they were perhaps Jews, and tells of the government's attempt to suppress them. Certainly this explains at least part of the king's reason for so abruptly refusing the petition for toleration of the Christian religion.

**The Disciples Stimulated by Ava Failure.** On their return Journey to Rangoon, the party stopped over night in Prome where they were surprised to meet U Shwe Ngong. They told him of the failure of their mission, the danger of further propagating or professing the religion of Jesus. He seemed to be less impressed and intimidated by their information than they had expected. Rather, the knowledge of the danger seemed to stimulate him for he said, "Then if I must die, I shall die in a good cause."

He then asked the missionaries what he still lacked to become a full follower of Jesus. Judson replied that though he might be a disciple at heart, he was not a full disciple for he had not obeyed the command of Christ to be baptized. U Shwe Ngong seemed to ponder this statement most seriously.

When the party arrived back in Rangoon on February 18, *Judson asks toleration for Christian religion, 1820.*





1820, the disciples and the missionaries met to discuss the dangers of their situation. They discussed the possible departure of the missionaries and some of the disciples for Chittagong which was under the control of the East India Company on the west coast of Burma. The disciples surprised and delighted the missionaries by their courageous stand and in their urging that the situation was not yet quite desperate. Maung Naw and Maung Tha Hla were willing to accompany the missionaries, but Maung Pye said that because of the law forbidding a Burmese woman to leave the country, he could not go because of his wife. "But," he continued, "if I must remain here alone, I shall remain performing the duties of Jesus Christ's religion; no other shall I think of."

During the three or four days that followed, there was much activity. On the evening of the 24th, Maung Pye came in with his brother-in-law, Maung Myat Yah, to petition that the missionaries not leave Rangoon. Judson explained to him that it was useless to remain if they could not re-open the zayat or hold public worship and when no Burman would dare to examine the new religion.

"Teacher," Maung Pye replied, "my mind is distressed; I can neither eat nor sleep since I find that you are going away. I have been around among those who live near us and find some even now are examining the new religion. Brother Myat Yah is one of them, and he unites with me in my petition. Do stay till there are eight or ten disciples; then appoint one to be the teacher of the rest. Though you leave the country, the religion will spread of itself; the emperor himself cannot stop it."

The missionaries wept at hearing this. They assured them that they would stay on if there was any chance of success in Rangoon. The final decision was that the Colmans should go to Chittagong by themselves to prepare a place for the others in case they had to suddenly leave Rangoon, but that the Judsons would stay on to see how things developed.

U Shwe Ngong Resumes His Pilgrimage. U Shwe Ngong arrived from Prome ten days later. He announced that it was his desire to be a full disciple, and wanted to know what outward rules he must observe in case he

should become a follower of Christ. Judson told him that the disciples of Christ, after baptism, were associated together; that they assembled every Lord's day for worship; and that from time to time they received the sacrament of bread and wine.

U Shwe Ngong now went off on another tack: for the rest of the hot season of 1820 he concentrated his efforts on bringing the people from Nandawgon Village to the zayat for discussion and instruction. Dr. U Yan had a mind and outlook very much like that of his teacher and went through much the same stages of thinking as had U Shwe Ngong. Among those who frequently came with him were Ma Min Lay and her husband, Maung Myat Lah, and the latter's friend, U Tha Aye. All of these people shared a special love of the Scriptures. They almost quarrelled with one another for the only copy of Ephesians which Judson had ready.

Meanwhile the three disciples were busy making contacts. Maung Tha Hla made a trip to Shwedaung near Prome and brought back his relative, Maung Shwe Bay, who became so convinced of the truth of the Gospel that he was baptized within three days time, the quickest of any of the early

*"Only stay till there are eight or ten disciples . . ."*





Burmese Christians. He was so devoted and capable that he was appointed to assist the missionaries the following year.

Then Maung Pye brought his brother-in-law, Maung Myat Yah. Maung Tha Hla brought his brother-in-law, Maung Gway. These three, together with Maung Tha Yah, a resident on the compound, were all baptized between June 4th and July 16th, increasing the church membership by 100%.

Still U Shwe Ngong and the Nandawgon group were hesitating, though seemingly convinced of the truth of Jesus' religion. Ma Min Lay said to Ann Judson, "I am surprised to find this religion has such an effect on my mind as to make me love the disciples of Christ more than my dearest natural relative."

**U Shwe Ngong and Ma Min Lay Take the Final Step.** Unfortunately, at about the water festival time in April, Ann's old liver complaint again flared up. By July it became apparent that if her life was to be saved, her husband must take her at once to doctors in Calcutta. The day before they were to go aboard ship, U Shwe Ngong made his final decision for Christ. He was baptized on the night of the 18th. When Ma Min Lay, who had been staying by Ann's bedside, heard that U Shwe Ngong had actually gone to the baptismal pond, she exclaimed, "Ah, he has now gone to obey the command of Jesus Christ while I remain without obeying. I shall not be able to sleep tonight. I must go home and consult my husband, and return." By nine o' clock she had come back, accompanied by two women from her village. She asked to be baptized immediately. The disciples present consented without hesitaton, so Judson baptized her by lantern light, the tenth Burman convert and the first woman to become a Christian. On returning to the house she said, "Now I have taken the oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ, and I have nothing to do but commit myself, my soul and body, into the hands of my Lord, assured that he will never suffer me to fall away."

**Summary.** Within a year the young church had grown to ten members. The king's refusal to grant toleration to Burmans



wishing to follow the new religion, and the emotion aroused by the imminent departure of Mr. Judson and his sick wife seemed to be what was required to tip the scales in the decision made for Christ by U Shwe Ngong and Ma Min Lay. As these ten members sat with the missionaries to partake of the Lord's Supper, they commemorated the dying love of their Saviour and pledged their lives to his service.

So was born the church in Rangoon—logger and fisherman, the poor and the rich, working man and intellectuals, men and women. One travelled the whole pathway to Christ in three days; another took two years. But once they had decided for Christ they were his for all time.

## 5 The Church Grows From Ten to Eighteen

1820-1823

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**A**DONIRAM and Ann Judson were absent in Calcutta and Serampore from July 19, 1820, until January 5, 1821. The doctors there could not cure Ann's chronic liver complaint, but their medicines and the change of climate did bring some improvement, permitting the Judsons to return to Burma.

During their absence from Rangoon, thirty thousand troops had marched through the town towards the frontiers of Siam, preparatory to a war with that country. All the people who had lived in the mission compound had scattered to the jungle, or taken refuge under some government person who could protect them from the heavy levies by petty officers. It is of interest to note that one of these friendly officers was Maung Zah, that first inquirer at the zayat on March 7, 1817.

Other news awaiting the Judsons was that Mya-day-min had been posted to Rangoon again after his residence at court. The day after their return, the Judsons called on him and his wife, now the *wungyigadaw*, and were kindly received. They learned that the Portuguese priest who had told the king that Colman and Judson were *Zandis* had died, thus removing one source of opposition at the capital.

**Mission Work Begins Again.** The Rangoon disciples including U Shwe Ngong, Ma Min Lay, Maung Tha Hla, and Maung Naw,<sup>1</sup> welcomed the returning missionaries most affectionately. All of the ten members had remained firm in the faith and attached to the cause. The five inquirers from Nandawgon Village mentioned on page 29 had continued their

1. This seems to be the last mention of Maung Naw in the early records.

religious interest in spite of the six months break in their instruction. Twenty-five people attended the worship service on January 21st, all respectful and devout—a thing which never could have been anticipated two years earlier as the zayat was being erected.

Dr. U Yan seemed to be moving in the direction of true faith. If this man with “words as smooth as oil, as sweet as honey, and as sharp as a razor” were to prove a true convert, he would be a most valuable addition to the Christian group, next to U Shwe Ngong. But this was never to be, for, though his interest continued, he was never able to give himself to the cause. He compared himself to a person who rejoices at intervals in the light of a glowworm, but finds that it is only momentary.

The most important event to occur while the Judsons were in Calcutta was a conspiracy on the part of the priests and elders of U Shwe Ngong’s village to destroy him. After daily consultations, one of their number, a member of the supreme court, went to the viceroy and complained that the teacher, U Shwe Ngong, was making every endeavour to turn the priests’ rice-pot bottom upwards.

“What consequence?” Mya-day-min replied; “let the priests turn it back again.” This sentence was enough; the hope of the conspirators was blasted, and all the disciples felt sure of toleration under Mya-day-min. But in the Burma of 140 years ago, things human did not continue indefinitely, and the king had refused to grant religious freedom to his subjects.

**First Christian School.** An occurrence of even more significance to the future of the Christian programme took place on January 20th when Ma Min Lay called Mrs. Judson to help her select a place for a school where boys and girls of the village could be taught to read without having to attend the monastic schools as was the usual practice. This she did entirely on her own initiative.

Back in November 1816 the Judsons and the Houghs had set down four methods by which they hoped to introduce the religion of Jesus Christ into the empire of Burma, but up till



1821 the fourth method—the instruction of Burmese children—had not been implemented. Perhaps this was due to the Judson's strong conviction that discipleship was open only to those who had reached an age of understanding. Perhaps, too, it was their hesitation to expose children to the great danger which surrounded those who dared to follow Christ. It is true that the Judsons had conducted evening classes in the *zayat*, but those were for adults only.

This school started by Ma Min Lay was the first of a long line of schools which have helped to train the young people of Burma during the succeeding 143 years. It is noteworthy, too, that this first school was coeducational and therefore radically different from the monastic schools which accepted boys only. From the very beginning, the gospel emphasis on the equality of the sexes in God's sight was given practical expression.

**Maung Ing—Second Convert, Eleventh To Be Baptized.** February of 1821 was important for the return to Rangoon of Maung Ing, the second Burman whose heart had been touched with divine grace. (See page 19.) He had gone to *Ma Min Lay Opens the First Christian School, 1820.*



Mergui on his fishing boat, where, not being content to be a solitary disciple, he started religious discussions with both Portuguese and Burmans, and found two or three who were willing to listen to news about the Eternal God.

Since he could remain in Rangoon only two weeks, he wanted to be baptized before his departure. None of the disciples had given more decided evidence of being a sincere and hearty believer in the Lord Jesus. So, following the service on March 4th, Maung Ing was baptized, becoming the eleventh member of the Rangoon church. After taking communion he left for Mergui, carrying with him various writings in Burmese and Portuguese to distribute among the people of that place. This man was to be of great help to the Judsons during the coming difficult war years; and later as an evangelist and the second ordained Burmese pastor, he was to be one of the important leaders in the spread of the church in Moulmein and Tenasserim, reminding us of an earlier fisherman who had lead the church in his day.

While Judson was working with some twenty adults in all stages of religious inquiry, he and U Shwe Ngong were revising the book of Ephesians and the first part of Acts. By May 15th these manuscripts were dispatched to Mr. Hough in Calcutta for the printing of a first edition of six hundred copies.

**First Burmese Evangelist.** Judson took Maung Shwe Bay, the fourth convert, into the service of the mission on June 4th. He showed more evidence than any other member of the church of being qualified for the ministry, for though inferior to Maung Tha Hla in fluency of speech, and to U Shwe Ngong in genius and address, he was superior to the former in consistency of character and gravity of deportment, and to the latter in experimental acquaintance with divine things and devotedness to the cause. But the principal trait of character which distinguished him from the rest was his humble and persevering desire for the office which sprang up in his heart soon after his conversion, and which had been growing ever since.

This is the man who, from not knowing that there was such a being in the universe as God, became a speculative believer, a penitent, a hopeful recipient of grace, and a candidate for



baptism all in the space of three days. (See page 29.) From trusting in his own merit, he had come to trust in the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a Christian worker, Maung Shwe Bay was later to do evangelistic work in the Moulmein-Amherst District, to help in the Moulmein reading zayat, and to teach part time in the Moulmein Girls' School. It was he who rescued the Karen murderer, Ko Tha Byu, from slavery and turned him over to the Judsons. In this way Maung Shwe Bay was responsible for the beginning of Christian work among the Karens.

At about sunset on June 15th, Ma Min Lay's sister, Ma Myat Gale, was baptized in the usual place. Her whole village of Nandawgon was in a great uproar over this event. It took real physical courage for her to obey Christ in this way. She was the second woman and the twelfth Burman to be baptized.

**Illness Again Interrupts Work.** All this interesting church activity was interrupted by serious sickness: both the Judsons came down with cholera and were so ill that they could not help each other. Ann's sickness so weakened her that she had a severe recurrence of her liver trouble. She had to be sent to America for treatment, stopping for several months with Christian friends in England before crossing the Atlantic. During much of her time in America she was so ill that she was confined to her room, but she did manage to write and see through the press a book called *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire*, the only account of the early years in Burma ever published by the Judsons themselves.

In spite of her illness, Ann managed to publicize the mission in Burma and to win backing for that undertaking. Her health remained far from satisfactory, but she felt a great compulsion to get back to her home and Christian friends in Rangoon. She left Boston for the last time on June 21, 1823, with a premonition that her remaining years were to be very few. With her she took a new missionary family, Rev. and Mrs. Jonathan Wade, who were to become well known for the help they gave the young Karen church and for the reduction of the Sgaw Karen language to writing. Ann arrived in Rangoon with the Wades on



December 5, 1823, after an absence of a year and a half.

**Judson Completes the Burmese New Testament.** While Ann was in America, Mr. Judson alternated between teaching in the zayat and further translation of the New Testament. By July the Gospel and Epistles of John had been completed, and the latter part of Acts. By the following March he had made a new translation of Matthew and had completed work on Mark and Luke, and was beginning Romans. By the end of June, 1823, just ten years after his arrival in Burma, he had completed the translation of the New Testament together with an introduction and summary of the Old Testament. He was still not satisfied with his translation of the Epistles and always kept a pencil and Greek New Testament by him whenever he read them in order to make further improvements. It was still to be some years before the manuscript would be printed, years which were to be filled with uncertainty and danger.

It was his goal throughout life to continually improve the translation so that it might become the useful standard for many years. It is no exaggeration to say that he achieved his goal, for in 1960 when a committee was called together by the Bible Society to consider the desirability of revising the Judson translation, little interest was shown on the part of the Burmese members, and the committee was disbanded. In the future there will be a place for a new Burmese translation in modern speech, but that will in no way replace Judson's work which is still considered by both Buddhist and Christian Burmans to be one of the finest existing examples of classical Burmese at its best.

**Opposition Scatters the Disciples.** The growth of the church seemed to come to a standstill during the thirteen months following the baptism of Ma Myat Gale and the departure of Ann Judson for America in 1821. By September, U Shwe Ngong had again been accused before the viceroy, this time of having embraced sentiments which aimed at the destruction of the Buddhist religion, and which were prejudicial to the existing authorities. The viceroy had replied that if these assertions were true, U Shwe Ngong was deserving of death.

The teacher and his friends had closely watched the proceed-

ings, and had a boat ready for U Shwe Ngong and his family, stocked with necessities and tracts. They went upriver to Shwe-daung near Prome where he busily employed himself as a Christian teacher among the semi-atheists of that area, making quite a stir.

U Shwe Ngong's accusation and flight caused such alarm among the disciples and inquirers that the zayat was closed, the mission house being used as a gathering place instead. It was during this period that Judson was able to give almost full time to Bible translation.

**Death of Maung Tha Hla.** The Rangoon church was further weakened in November by the sudden death of Maung Tha Hla. In a state of perfect health, he was attacked with cholera and died in less than nineteen hours. His death was severely felt because he was one of the few disciples in the habit of leading in public prayer, frequently expressing ideas in the most appropriate and edifying manner. A young man of fine talents, superior education, and with a particularly interesting mode of communicating religious truths, he was the first of the church members to die. Cholera, dysentery, malaria, smallpox, and tuberculosis were widespread and almost unchecked, no wonder that life expectancy was short for both Burman and missionary. The wonder was that any survived for more than a few years.

**First Medical Missionary.** Because of this public health situation, the arrival on December 13, 1821, of Dr. and Mrs. Jonathan Price, the first medical appointees to the Burma mission, was particularly welcome. But even the doctors of those days lacked the medicines to control the worst killers; the doctor's own wife died just five months later. Nevertheless, Price's knowledge was to prove most valuable both in the treatment of disease and in the opening of official doors at court where the king was always on the lookout for scientific advances.

A little over a month later, on January 20, 1822, Mr. and Mrs. Hough returned to Rangoon from Serampore. The mission house was once again bulging at the joints, and language study had to begin all over again for the newcomers. U Shwe Ngong ventured back to Rangoon and took over the instruction of the



doctor and his wife.

**Important Period of Church Growth.** The rainy season of 1822 brought both a recurrence of Judson's cholera and fever and an amazing renewal of growth in the little church whose membership increased to eighteen. First of all came the baptism on July 21st of Ma Doke, sister-in-law of Ma Min Lay and Ma Myat Gale of Nandawgon Village. Within a month of her baptism, three other women joined the church: Ma May Zoo, Ma Min Oo; and Ma May Mee. Then to cap this series of baptisms came U Tha Aye, also of Nandawgon Village, a well-to-do householder of forty-nine years. He had been attending worship and the zayat for two long years, but only now was he ready to follow Christ at any cost. Later, on January 4, 1829, he became the first Burman to be ordained. He served as the faithful pastor of the Rangoon church during the difficult and dangerous years between the first and second Anglo-Burmese wars.

This series of baptisms in 1822 reminds us of that earlier series of four which took place in July 1820. These two series had in common the fact that they occurred just before the missionaries started on journeys whose outcomes were uncertain. In the first case, Mr. Judson was having to take his very sick wife to India for treatment; and in this second case he was about to start with Dr. Price on his second trip to Ava. Somehow or other it seems that the extra emotion and excitement, associated with the loss of the missionaries, even though temporary, was strong enough to tip the scales in favour of a decision for Christ.

**Judson's Method And Message.** A little over three years had elapsed since the beginning of zayat preaching and the distribution of Christian tracts. These tracts had served two purposes; they stirred up interest in the new religious teacher and brought many people to the zayat to hear more. Then the Gospel of Matthew and tracts presenting the basis of the Christian faith served as follow-up for those who had visited the zayat and were interested in carrying the subject further.

The whole basis of Judson's approach was person-to-person teaching in an informal atmosphere in which the visitors were



perfectly free to express their views as well as to hear his. The Gospel he preached was that there is an Eternal God who is not subject to change or decay, whose children we are; that in not recognizing and obeying him, man is guilty of sin; that all men are sinners and as such will suffer in hell in the future life; but that God, being love, sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save sinners, with the result that those who believe on him and follow his commands may lead changed lives and share in his great merit and look forward to a happy life in heaven.

An orthodox Buddhist denies that there is any being who is eternal and not subject to change, but he does understand goodness and compassion, and the effects of evil deeds on a person's future which may take him to hell or through endless rounds of existence which are characterized by suffering. He looks forward to a state called *nirvana* where suffering, pain, and trouble will cease. He knows of the possibility of the transference of merit or *karma*, though, on the whole, he does not believe that there is any escape from the results of his deeds.

If, therefore, Judson's hearers would come to have a basic belief in God, then the rest of the Christian system fitted in beautifully with their previous belief. The atonement appeared to them a most appropriate working out of God's goodness and love for human life.

**Early Christians From Two Backgrounds.** The people who were attracted by this early Christian teaching belonged to two distinct groups, the orthodox Buddhists and the sceptical "semi-atheists", as Judson called them, who were no longer practicing Buddhists but who, like U Shwe Ngong and the Nandawgon group, believed in a diffuse sort of Wisdom which took for them the place of God. About half the members of the early church came out of this background. They were highly intelligent, very thoughtful, and most faithful disciples. The very fact that they had been skeptics showed their independence of character, mental alertness, and fearlessness. Though they often took a year or more to examine every phase of Christian thought, yet once they made up their minds, they became very staunch disciples. From such people the early church was formed.

## 6 The Church Established in the Capital

1823

Judson very much hesitated to leave Rangoon at this promising juncture, but the king had called for Dr. Price to come to the capital and Judson had to go along to interpret for him. Their departure for Ava was delayed for several days after the baptism of the last four disciples on July 21, 1822, in consequence of the death of the friendly viceroy, Mya-day-min.

However, they arrived in the capital on September 27th after just a month's trip up the Irrawaddy. What memories must have pressed upon Judson as Ava again came into view! In spite of the failure of his former mission to secure religious toleration for Burmans, the Rangoon church had continued to grow. But Mr. Colman, his missionary companion on the former trip, had died in Chittagong where he had gone to open up a possible evacuation station.

**King Bagyidaw Quizzes Judson.** On this second trip to Ava it was Judson's new companion who was the centre of interest. As a matter of fact, it was not till their fourth visit to the palace that the king even deigned to notice Judson other than as interpreter for Dr. Price. But when he did notice him, he asked a question which really put Judson on the spot: "And you in black, what are you? A medical man too?"

When Judson replied that he was a teacher of religion, the king asked the alarming question whether any persons had become Christians. Judson tried to evade the question by replying, "Not here." But the king persisted, "Are there any in Rangoon?" To this Judson replied, "There are a few."

"Are they foreigners?" the king asked next. Judson trembled

for the consequence of his answer which might involve the little church in ruin. "There are some foreigners and some Burmans," he replied. The king remained silent for a few seconds, but soon showed that he was not displeased by asking a number of questions on religion, geography, and astronomy. The monarch of the Empire, having distinctly understood that some of his subjects had embraced the Christian religion, had not been angered! Needless to say, the missionaries were greatly encouraged about the future of the church.

**Christianity and National Culture.** But the king was still curious about Christianity and its effects upon his subjects who had accepted it. One day he asked if the Burmese Christians were real Burmans and whether they dressed like others. Judson assured him that they were real Burmans and that they wore *longyis* and *aingyis* just like their fellow countrymen.

Some years earlier, when Judson had been talking with his language teacher, U Aung Min, the latter had referred to a Burman who had become a Catholic as one who had "become a Portuguese." Evidently the king was interested in learning whether Burmese Baptists were still Burmans or whether their change of religion had denationalized them.

In the whole matter of cultural change, Judson took a very sensible attitude, expecting the Burmese Christians still to retain the costume of the country, and to respect those national usages which were common to high and low, the rich and the poor, unless there were some special reasons to change. (1853a Wayland 378).

Sometimes he did see reason to change, as in the matter of a Hindu convert's changing his name if it happened to be that of a Hindu god. In such an instance Judson recorded, "We have not been in the habit of changing Burmese names (at baptism) as they generally are destitute of any bad significance; but the names of Hindus sometimes...require to be cast off." (1853a Wayland 372).

Though Burmans normally do not change names or style of clothing on becoming Christians, yet without a doubt their previous religion has entered so deeply into all their early and



more pleasing associations, that in the process of time it becomes entwined with the very fibres of their nationality, so that they literally *forsake all* when they embrace Christianity. (1853b Wayland 347).

After 150 years the question asked by King Bagyidaw is still pertinent. Burman Christians today hear it said that to be a good Burman, one must be a Buddhist. Christians today are trying their best to demonstrate that while following Christ they still are good and loyal citizens. Being Christians does not make them love their country less; they humbly hope that their varied contributions may enrich all in twentieth century Burma.

**Judson's Attitude towards Gautama, the Buddha.** But the king was not finished with Judson yet: granted that Burmese Christians were still Burmans, just what did Judson have to say of Gautama, the Buddha?

Though this question was potentially as dangerous as the first that the king had asked, Judson did not hesitate in replying that all knew that he was the son of King Thog-dau-dah-nah; that he regarded him as a wise man and a teacher, but did not call him God.

"That is right," exclaimed Atwinwun Maung K. who preceeded to repeat what Judson had previously told him about God and Christ. Even Maung Zah, Minister of State, began to take the side of God before His Majesty, saying, "Nearly all the world, your majesty, believe in an eternal God; all except Burma and Siam, these little spots!" His majesty remained silent, and after some other desultory inquiries, he abruptly rose and departed. (1853a Wayland 250).

**Opportunities to Witness at Court.** Still another time the king asked Judson to give him an illustration of how he preached in Burmese, a request that gave Judson an opportunity to speak of Christ before the chief leaders of the country, a very different situation from that on his first trip to Ava.

The Atwinwun, Maung K., treated Judson with great frankness. Laying aside his official dignity, he entered into a most spirited discussion on various points of religion. This man, as

governor of Rangoon in 1830, was to invite Judson to settle in that city under his patronage. (1853a Wayland 247).

Maung Tsoo, the Royal Secretary, was perhaps the most friendly of all the officials towards the missionaries, though the 28-year old Prince Mekara, eldest half brother of the king, and his wife, Princess S. who was the king's own sister, seemed deeply interested in discussing religion. They permitted Dr. Price to build a house on their land in Sagaing. Through a minister of state, Judson was able to secure the use of a plot of land for a future mission compound on the bank of the river just outside the walls of the town and about a mile from the palace.

**The King Invites the Missionaries to Settle in Ava.** Having got Dr. Price introduced and settled, and having made contacts with the court officials, Judson wished to return to Rangoon as word had reached him that the situation there had deteriorated. Also he was hoping that there would be some word waiting for him from Ann in America.

When the king heard of the intended departure, he asked Judson to stay on in Ava with Dr. Price. Judson agreed that after his wife's return they would come and settle permanently in the capital. With this the king was satisfied.

**Temporary Return to Rangoon.** A quick trip of seven days brought Judson the 350 miles through the robber-infested territory to Rangoon on February 2, 1823, where the Christians were having a very difficult time under the heavy taxation and harassments of all kinds allowed under the new viceroy of Rangoon who had replaced Mya-day-min. A house of the Nandawgon people had been demolished and the site taken by the government, at the instigation of neighbours who hated them on account of their change of religion. These Christians, together with most of the others, moved across the river to Dallah to be less directly accessible.

Because conditions prevented much direct evangelistic work, Judson again spent most of his time in Bible translation until Ann and the Wades arrived on December 5, 1823. Though friends in Calcutta had urgently advised them to delay in India because war was threatening between the East India Company and Burma,

they insisted on continuing to Rangoon.

**Third Journey to Ava.** Leaving the Houghs to look after the Wades, Judson took Ann aboard a high-sterned river boat on the 12th and pushed off on the third trip to Ava, with high hopes and happy heart, his wife much recovered and by his side. By poling and pulling, the unwieldy boat was slowly moved against the wind and current.

Maung Ing was the only Burmese Christian with them; he was to serve as a teacher in a girls' school which Ann was planning to open. Three other disciples had gone ahead to await their arrival in the capital. Ma Min Lay and others planned to follow as soon as their household affairs would permit. The final member of the party was Koo-chil, a Bengali Muslim cook who had come with Ann from Calcutta and who was to be a staunch helper in the difficult years ahead. The young church was on the move and was about to be established at the heart of the Empire.



## 7 The First Anglo - Burmese War Brings Destruction

1824

One happening on the upriver trip foreshadowed some of the difficult days ahead. The first sure sign of war appeared at Sin-pyu-kywon (White Elephant Island) about one hundred miles this side of Ava, where part of the troops under the command of the celebrated Bandoola had encamped. As the Judsons went further north, they met Bandoola himself, seated on his golden barge and surrounded by a fleet of golden war boats, one of which was sent to make inquiries of the Judson party. They were allowed to go on when they informed the messenger that they were Americans, not British, and were going to Ava in obedience to the command of his majesty.

On their arrival at Ava they found that Dr. Price was out of favour at court, and that suspicion rested on most of the foreigners then in the capital. The king was quite cool to Judson; his mind was occupied with the move of the royal family into the new Ava palace in three weeks time, and with the approaching hostilities. The wife of Mya-day-min was openly friendly, but since her husband had died she had lost her position of influence. Prince Mekara and his wife were friendly but somewhat reticent. It was not long before an order was issued forbidding all foreigners from entering the new palace.

The Judsons thought it best, under the circumstances, to go quietly about their mission work. Ann opened her school with three little girls, two of them the children of Maung Shwe Bay. Judson held a service in Burmese in the house every evening and preached on Sundays in Dr. Price's house across the river at Sagaing.

**Rangoon Falls.** Evidently the Bengal government had decided to anticipate Bandoola's attack on Chittagong by invading Rangoon, for on May 11, 1824, six thousand troops under Sir Archibald Campbell took Rangoon with little opposition. For twenty-four hours Mr. Hough and Mr. Wade were in great danger while being held as hostages by the Burmese troops, but they were released by the arriving English. Since mission work proved to be impossible under the new conditions, the two mission families went to Calcutta for the duration of the war.

Twelve days later the news of the fall of Rangoon reached Ava. An army of about 12,000 men was quickly sent down the river for Rangoon, under the command of the Kyi Wungyi, the soldiers dancing and in high spirits, for all were confident that the invaders would be quickly defeated.

**Foreigners Detained.** As war psychology developed and spread in the capital, the English residents, Gouger, Laird, and Rogers, were questioned and locked up. Soon Judson and Price were examined but released as nothing was found against them. However, as government officers were going through Gouger's business records, they found entries showing that he had paid money to the missionaries. Since there were no banks in those days, this business man with contacts in Calcutta, had been transmitting funds which had come from America through the English Baptist Mission in Serampore. The Burmese officials were not used to such banking methods and considered the sums as payments by the English to the Americans for spying. Judson and Price were therefore clapped into the Ava death prison on June 8th.

Ann, who was two months pregnant, was left in a most dangerous situation with only Maung Ing and Koo-chil to help her and the children. The guards on the house were crude and demanding, and it was only with gifts of tea and cheroots that they were made a little less unpleasant.

**Ann's Efforts on Behalf of her Husband.** First, Ann made every effort to persuade the wives of some of the members of the royal family to intercede with the king for the release of her husband and Dr. Price, but it turned out



that they did not dare to ask any favour of the king as long as the British had not been driven out. In spite of daily visits and generous gifts, Ann was not able to make any headway on this level. She therefore began to concentrate on the City Governor who was in charge of prisons. With gifts and daily visits she was able to get from this man some improvement in the prisoners' conditions.

One day a friendly official warned Ann that her home would soon be searched and property of value confiscated. Acting on this information, Ann quickly hid the manuscript of the New Testament and as many little articles as possible, together with considerable silver, because she knew that they would starve without these resources if the war should be long drawn out. The Royal Treasurer and the Governor of the North Gate of the Palace, who were members of the search party, treated Mrs. Judson with great consideration, permitting her to keep clothing and other household items. At the end of the war all of the items which they confiscated were returned.

The conditions in the death prison were awful. The best that Ann could accomplish for the prisoners was food, all of which *Ann brings the New Testament manuscript hidden in the pillow.*





had to be secured from the outside, and occasional permission for the prisoners to exercise outside in the prison yard. Judson often had malaria and began to show the effects of his painful confinement. Along with other things which Ann was able to take him was a hard pillow inside of which she had hidden the New Testament manuscript, feeling that it was safer in the prison than hidden in the earth under their house where the termites might eat it.

General Bandoola, who had been having some successes in Arakan, was recalled to Ava and put in charge of the operations against the English in Lower Burma. While he was present in the capital, Ann took her courage in her hands and appealed to him for the release of Judson and Price. He received her courteously: though the men were not released, they were permitted to stay in an open hut in the prison yard.

When the time came for the birth of Ann's baby, she had to give up her daily visits to the prison, the four-mile walk through the heat and the dust being just too much for her. Two months later the prisoners were all put back into the inner prison and shackled with five pairs of fetters. Ann soon learned that this sterner treatment coincided with the arrival of the news of Bandoola's defeat near Rangoon and his withdrawal to Danubyu, with the loss of many of his soldiers.

Ann rushed to the Governor of the City and appealed with such feeling for the prisoners who were now crowded in the bakeoven inner room with no ventilation, that the governor wept like a child. He confessed that three times the queen's brother had ordered the execution of all foreign prisoners. The least he could do was to put them out of sight when such an order came. He promised Ann never to execute her husband, but said that he could not release him.

**Shock of General Bandoola's Death.** Before long, news arrived that Bandoola had been killed and that the British were advancing on Prome. The rulers were shocked and dumbfounded. The common people became restless for the weight of the war was heavy on their shoulders, not a pya of the costs having been paid from the royal treasury.

In Bandoola's place, the Pakanwun offered to lead the new army, promising to drive out the invaders. He was very anti-foreign, and it was on his order that the prisoners were driven like cattle along the burning roads in the hottest part of the hot season, when the thermometer stands at 110 degrees in the shade, to the ramshackle village of Aungbinle where his orders included a mass execution.

**Ann Traces her Husband.** When Ann found that the prisoners were gone, she was frantic. Maung Ing found Judson's hard pillow containing the New Testament manuscript in the deserted prison yard and rescued it. Through the burning heat, and taking baby Maria and the school girls with her, Ann traced the prisoners first the eight miles south to Amarapura and then the four miles east to Aungbinle village.

There Ann persuaded a jailer to let her and the children sleep in his paddy bin, a place where she continued to live for the next six months. Aided by the faithful Koo-chil, she kept up life and hope in the prisoners, nursing little Maria who came down with smallpox, until her own health gave way and she hung between life and death for two months.

**Judson Assigned as Translator at Peace Talks.** It was when Ann was recovering that the wonderful news came from the Governor of the North Gate that Judson should report to the court house at Ava. There, to their great consternation, Judson was again confined to jail until he was sent down river to act as interpreter and translator in the Burmese camp. He arrived at Maloun on the third day with a high fever but was obliged to enter at once on the work of translating. During his six-weeks stay there, he suffered physically as much as he had at any time in prison, except he was not in chains, nor exposed to the insults of the jailers.

Two weeks after Judson's departure for Maloun, Ann, still weak from her Aungbinle sickness, came down with spotted fever. For seventeen days the fever raged. Fortunately at this juncture Dr. Price was released from prison and came to her aid.

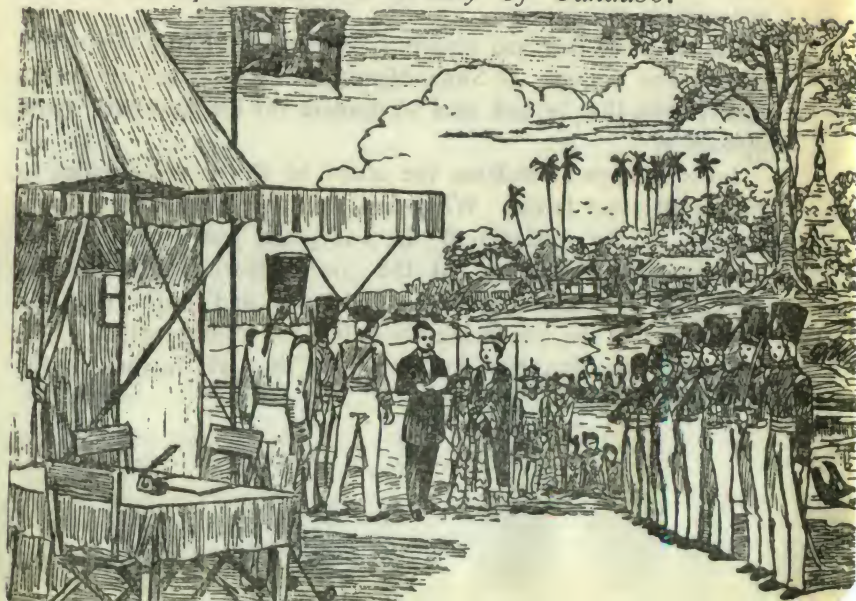
**Appreciation of Missionaries' Help.** When Judson returned to Ava with the officials bringing the English peace terms, he



was again confined to prison with an order that he be returned to Aungbinle. On Ann's request carried by Maung Ing, the Governor of the North Gate presented a petition to the high court. After obtaining his release, he took him to his house where he treated him with kindness. Ann was moved there, too, as soon as her returning health would permit. This man deserves always to be remembered for his compassion and courage at a time when so few came forward to help. The Christians of Burma in 1963 salute his memory!

From that time on, Judson and Price were daily called to the palace and consulted; in fact, nothing was done without their approval. Finally, Sir Archibald Campbell demanded that all foreign prisoners be permitted to depart. The king, on being told, said, "The teachers are not English; they are my people and shall not go." Had he only taken this position somewhat earlier, how different this story might have been. In that case the Judsons might have stayed on, and the church might have been more quickly established at the capital and become more deeply rooted among the Burmese people. As it was, Dr. Price decided to remain in Ava in the service of the king, but Ann's health was so

*Judson Interprets at the Treaty of Yandabo.*





reduced that her husband felt it only right they leave for Lower Burma where medical aid might be secured for her. Besides something might still occur which would cause the break-off of the negotiations, and passions might flare up again.

On the way down river, Ann and Adoniram were received at Yandabo with the greatest kindness by General Campbell and his staff. The treaty of peace with which Judson again helped, was concluded within two weeks, signed by both parties, and a termination of hostilities publicly declared on February 24, 1826. With the treaty completed, the Judsons went on down river and reached the mission house after an absence of two years and three months, one year and seven months of which time Judson was in prison.

**The Scattered Disciples Begin to Reassemble.** During the war the disciples and inquirers had been dispersed in all directions. Several, probably including U Naw, had died; others, the Judsons met on their trip down river. Among these were Ma Min Lay and Ma Doke who were living on a boat at Prome. When the missionaries told of their plans to move into the Tenasserim District which had just been ceded to the British, these two disciples instantly resolved to accompany them.

Maung Shwe Bay had stayed in the mission house the whole of the war period. U Shwe Ngong was missing but the report finally came that he had died of cholera on his way back from upcountry.

Judson's hope of shifting the centre of Christian activities to the capital had failed. What had at first seemed so promising, because of the madness of the war years, had produced only suffering and disruption for the young church, with many of its eighteen members scattered or dead, and with Ann so weakened that she was to live for only a few more months.

So closes the Rangoon-Ava portion of the early history of the church in Burma.

## 8 Beginning Again at Amherst

1826 - 1827

How the history of the church in Burma might have been changed had the Judsons decided to stay on in Ava after the war instead of returning to lower Burma, we can only guess. We know that it was their intention to settle in Ava permanently after Ann's return from America in 1823. Judson had considered that the capital was a more strategic place for church work than Rangoon, and that the highest government officers were more tolerant towards Christianity than the lesser district officials.

As already indicated, the factor which counted most heavily in their decision to leave Ava, was Ann's much weakened physical condition and the chance to get medical help from English doctors. Another factor became operative at Yandabo when it became certain that the two west-facing coastal areas of Burma, Tenasserim and Arakan, were to be ceded to the East India Company. The British officials had indicated that, contrary to the anti-missionary policy of the Company which had caused the Judsons so much trouble in India during 1812 and 1813, they would freely permit missionary activities in the areas which they controlled. Judson felt a great compulsion to go where he could preach most effectively. Dr. Price remained in Ava where he died from tuberculosis two years later.

**Choosing a New Centre.** Since Rangoon was not included in the area to be transferred, and since the Mons were attacking the city in an attempt to regain their independence, a further move was in order for what remained of the young church.

Mr. Crawford, the English civil commissioner, invited Judson

to accompany the group which was to select the site for the new capital of the ceded Tenasserim province. They chose a tract of wild seashore country at the mouth of the Salween River, naming the site *Amherst* in honour of the then governor-general of India.

Dr. Judson determined to bring his family and join the first settlers in the new place. In Rangoon he took down the old zayat which had served the young church so well, and arranged for the shipment of its boards to Amherst. Nothing could be salvaged from the mission house as it had already been destroyed by the attacking Mons.

On July 2, 1826, the Judsons arrived in Amherst. They were received kindly by Captain Fenwick, the military officer in charge of the new station who vacated his house and put it at their disposal. Maung Shwe Bay and Maung Ing had preceded the Judsons to Amherst: Maung Ing was to help Mrs. Judson establish the first school in the settlement, while Maung Shwe Bay did missionary work from house to house. All together there were about fifty Burmese, Chinese, Muslim, and European houses in addition to military buildings.

The work which had been so promising in Rangoon now had to be started over again, but this time the foundations were already laid. The New Testament had been translated and portions of it, together with several tracts, had been printed. There were soon to be two new missionary families to help the Judsons, and three of the converts who had survived both war and cholera formed a working nucleus. But how they missed Maung Naw, Maung Tha Hla, Ma Mya Gale, and U Shwe Ngong! The memories of these early companions were to inspire and drive them on in their new efforts to plant the word of God.

**Last Attempt to Win Official Toleration.** Meanwhile one temptation presented itself which Judson could not resist. After leaving Ava he had resolved to avoid all secular occupation and to do nothing but preach the Gospel, but now Mr. Crawford asked him to return to Ava to help negotiate the commercial treaty which had been agreed to in principle in the Treaty of Yandabo. The inducement offered by Mr. Crawford was that he would try to secure an article in the commercial treaty in favour of mutual



religious toleration, the Burman government to agree not to discriminate against its subjects who might choose to become Christians and the British government to grant a similar privilege to its subjects on behalf of Buddhism.

This hope of securing religious toleration for Burmans desiring to become followers of Christ was an objective towards which Judson had long worked. Though it was not so necessary for Burmans who lived under British rule, it was still very important for those living in sections ruled from Ava. On Ann's urging, Judson agreed to accompany Mr. Crawford, hoping to be home again within three or four months. He and Ann parted, confident of a speedy reunion and many years of future domestic happiness in their new home. (1853a Wayland 335).

On the 30th September, 1826, Judson arrived in Ava for the fourth and last time. Many of his old friends welcomed him warmly and heaped gifts upon him, but he soon found that some of the officials were deeply offended at his acting as interpreter for the conquerors, even though they knew that his primary purpose was to try once again to get the royal sanction of religious freedom for Burma nationals. Judson was mistaken in supposing that a religious-toleration rider might be tacked onto a commercial treaty: the Burmese had agreed to negotiate a commercial treaty but that was all.

**Ann's Death.** But worse was yet to come. On the 24th October word reached Ava that Ann had died in Amherst just a month before. The sun went out for Adoniram Judson. The being whom he had loved better than all else on earth, who had been so intimately associated in all his efforts to establish the church in Burma, had, in an unexpected moment, been removed from him.

She had built a small bamboo and thatch house and moved into it just three weeks before she was taken ill with malaria. As the second week of fever dragged into the third she said, "The teacher is long in coming; I must die alone and leave my little one, but as it is the will of God, I acquiesce in his will. I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid I shall not be able to bear these pains. Tell the teacher that the disease was most violent and I could

not write."

On the eighteenth day, in spite of all that Dr. Richardson, the military doctor, could do, she died, her bouts with sickness in Ava having reduced her resistance. She was buried on the cliff overlooking the sea, beneath a towering Hope tree (*Hopea odorata*), in Burmese called *thingan*.

Five of the eighteen Rangoon converts had died before Ann, and Ma Min Lay had only a few more months to live. It is difficult for us who live in the second half of the twentieth century with our modern drugs such as, penicillin, aureomycin, chloroquine, and PAS, to realize how short and uncertain life could be in the tropics 150 years ago. Though Ann's thirteen years in Burma exceeded the average for those early days, her death, when prospects looked so promising, was a great loss to the growing church. Her sincere and intelligent religious faith, her excellent knowledge of Burmese, her pleasant and friendly manner which won friends and respect for the mission in every circle, and her deep love for Adoniram and her little one made her loss seem irreplaceable.

*Ann Judson dies after thirteen years in Burma.*





Yet we need not say with some of the people of her day, "God saw fit to remove her, for her work was done." (1854 Stewart 346). To our understanding one hundred and thirty-seven years later, her work was *not* done. We believe that God's father-heart must have cried out in anguish to see the body of his faithful servant at last overcome by malarial parasites. It has been largely since her day that doctors have learned enough to make true the words of the Great Healer that men of faith would do even greater things than he had done.

**Ma Min Lay Follows Ann.** Ann Judson, paragon of Christian womanhood, was survived by her counterpart in Burma, Ma Min Lay, by only nine months. It will be recalled that the Judsons had found her living on a boat at Prome after the war, and that she and Ma Doke had agreed to move with the missionaries to the new centre for mission work in Tenasserim province to the east. She had carried out that plan and was throwing herself into the work at Amherst when she came down with a type of dropsy. When her condition became serious, she was moved to the mission house and cared for most lovingly. As she grew weaker, she talked of entering heaven and of meeting Mrs. Judson and other friends. "But first of all, I shall hasten to where my Saviour sits, and fall down and worship, and adore him for his great love in sending the teachers to show me the way to heaven." About nine o'clock on an evening in July 1827, Ma Min Lay's happy spirit took its flight.

**Wades and Boardmans Join the Mission.** Dr. Judson did not get back from Ava until January 24, 1827. In Amherst he joined the family of Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Wade who had come from Calcutta a month after Ann's death. On the 17th April Mr. and Mrs. Dana Boardman joined the mission. This young couple had been inspired to come to Burma to take up the work which had been begun by the Colmans. The health of Mrs. Boardman soon made it necessary for them to go to Moulmein for medical advice. Since that town was growing much faster than Amherst, under the patronage of General Campbell, it was decided to establish a branch of the mission there, the Boardmans staying on for that purpose. (1853a Wayland 341).



**New Station Opened in Moulmein.** General Campbell kindly offered the necessary ground for the new mission station. Judson and Boardman chose a site about three quarters of a mile south of the military cantonment, just on the edge of the large Burman town, with a fine view of the river. This is the same Judson Boy's High School site on Tavoy Jetty Road where Baptist work still goes on one hundred and thirty-five years later. With centres in both Amherst and Moulmein, the mission was in a position to adjust its work as developments would present the opportunity.

In Amherst Judson began church services in Burmese after an intermission of two and a half years. Ma Loon Byay, wife of a French trader, was the first new inquirer to become convinced of the truth of the Christian way. Mrs. Wade, who was taking Ann's place in women's work, was mainly responsible for teaching Ma Loon Byay and her twelve year old daughter. She was baptized on May 20th, the first disciple to be added after the war.

**Maung Ing's First Missionary Journey.** At one of the evening meetings about the middle of February, Maung Ing expressed his desire to make a missionary journey down the coast to Tavoy and Mergui. He was therefore licensed to preach and teach but without the charge of any church or authority to administer the ordinances.

Thus the first Burman preacher ever to be commissioned, set out by country boat for Tavoy, a town at that time of about 8000 people. He used the five days of the voyage to talk with the boat's crew who listened but did not show much genuine interest. In Tavoy Maung Ing spent several interesting days before proceeding to Mergui, his native place, where he built a small residence and zayat by the wayside.

In order to attract visitors he laboriously printed out some Christian ideas on a banner and suspended it in front of his house. This seems to have been the very first use of visual aids now so popular in religious work. He preached the gospel to all he met—in the streets, in houses, in zayats—finding a few who were sincerely interested, particularly Maung Pyu and his wife, Ma Thwai, and Maung Nay from Rangoon. He returned to

Amherst after the rains, having been away eight months.

**Sunshine and Shadow in Amherst.** Meanwhile in Amherst, Judson's only surviving child died and was buried beside her mother under the Hopea tree. Maung Shwe Bay also lost his daughter, Abbey, who had been in Ava with the Judsons during the war. These, together with Ma Min Lay, made the little church realize once more that they were all on earthly probation, and that their time was short to accomplish for God the conversion of his people in Burma.

A mat zayat for the girls' school was completed in which Mrs. Wade carried on the work Ann Judson had started. For this school Mr. Judson wrote short textbooks in astronomy and geography, with a map of the world with Burmese names. By the following November when the school was shifted to Moulmein, there were eleven pupils who moved with the school.

Church activities continued during the hot season. Among the serious inquirers were Ma Doke's husband, Maung Dwah; Ko Tha Byu,<sup>1</sup> who was to be the first Karen to be baptized and who would become the great Karen apostle; and Nai Myat Pu, son-in-law of a Mon chief who emigrated from Rangoon with his followers. It is probable that Mai Myat Pu was the son-in-law of Judson's first serious inquirer, Maung Zah, (see page 13) who later acted as patron to some of the Christians when they had to flee from Rangoon. (See page 32.) Langham-Carter (1947,24) records that Maung Zat, Myothugyi of Syriam, migrated with 10,000 followers in 1827 and settled on the Ataran River not far from Moulmein.

In August Judson went up to Moulmein to visit the Boardmans, staying on till November, helping with the work. He could easily see that Moulmein was growing much faster than Amherst. It also became certain that Moulmein was to replace Amherst as the administrative centre of the province.

Judson therefore returned to Amherst and supervised the packing and shifting of the school, the workers, and some of the new disciples to Moulmein which was to be the chief centre of Baptist work until the end of the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852.

1. Maung Shwe Bay had bought Ko Tha Byu when he was being sold as a slave because of debt.

## 9 By the Old Moulmein Pagoda

1827 - 1833

The Mon name for Moulmein according to Rev. J.M. Haswell, was *Mot-mua-lum*, meaning "one-eye-destroyed". The legend is that an ancient king of Moulmein had three eyes, the third being in the middle of his forehead. With this third "radar-eye" he could see what was going on in neighbouring countries. The king of Siam, to neutralize this advantage, sent his daughter to win the confidence of the king and then put out this third eye. The stratagem proved successful, and hence the name of the city.

This town which had been under many different rulers—Shan, Siamese, Mon, and Burmese—was only a Mon fishing village when General Campbell chose it as his military headquarters. It was the start of a caravan route to Siam. Its harbour was sheltered during the monsoon season, lying just below the meeting place of the three big rivers—Salween, Gyaing, and Ataran. From Moulmein the army could protect the new British province from attacks by Burmese government troops or by armed robbers from across the Salween.

Along the river front there was a single road which ran through the bazaar of the village, but just behind this the dense jungle began in which were tigers, elephants, and even rhinos. On top of the ridge of hills back of the town was the old Moulmein pagoda about which Kipling was to write. The view from the ridge was breath-taking in every direction—rivers, dense jungle, rice fields, grotesque rocks starting up in the middle of level plains like the ruins of pre-historic cathedrals, pagoda-capped hills, and, in the distance, blue mountains. Zwakabin peak twenty miles to the north was christened by the British "The Duke of York's



Nose" after the then commander-in-chief of the British army. To the east of the ridge was an area called Daingwun-kwin after the Daingwun, a Burmese general who camped there in 1808 on his way to quell a rebellion in Tavoy and Mergui and to fight the Siamese. Across the river to the west was *Bilugyun* or Ogre's Island.

**Mon Population Introduces New Problems.** Such was the setting to which the Amherst group moved at the beginning of the cool season of 1827. They arranged a large room at the front of the mission house in the manner of a *zayat*, and began worship in the former Rangoon fashion. About seventy persons attended the morning service after which Mrs. Wade took the twenty or thirty women to another room for discussion and instruction. In the evening, about thirty attended, with the usual after-service for questions and discussion. There Maung Dwah, husband of Ma Doke and brother of Ma Min Lay, came out very decidedly on the side of Christianity.

The missionaries and Burmese leaders soon realized that Moulmein differed markedly from Rangoon in its large Mon (Talaing or Peguan) population. After the Burmese from Upper Burma had captured the Mon kingdom of Pegu in 1757, the two peoples began to intermix in the Rangoon area with the result that in Judson's day the Mons and the Burmese were not always easily distinguishable. In the early contacts of the missionaries in Rangoon, little attention was paid to their separate backgrounds, but in Moulmein the Mons predominated.

When a neighbour, Nai Nu, came to the meeting to ask how he could learn God's will for his life, he was told to read the Scriptures. "I can read Talaing only, not Burman," he replied. The case of this man was that of the majority of the people of Moulmein. They could understand the Scriptures in Burmese when they were read aloud, but they could not read Burmese themselves. The church leaders therefore decided to set up a reading *zayat* on the roadside not far from the house, where Maung Shwe Bay would read the Scriptures

aloud half days, spending the other half teaching in the girls' school and the new boys' school opened by Mr. Boardman.

For the sake of making as many contacts as possible with the Moulmein people and visitors from the districts, two preaching zayats also were opened, the first located half a mile south of the mission on the Tavoy-zu Road, to be occupied by Mr. Wade and Maung Ing. The second, to be occupied by Mr. Judson, was located two and a half miles to the north in a thickly settled bazaar area called Koung-zay-kyun. The result of the zayat preaching was much the same as in Rangoon: very soon one and then another became deeply interested in the Christian way. Even an elderly priest attended daily and seemed to be convinced of the truth. It was not long before a series of baptisms started which far surpassed those in Rangoon ten years earlier.

In 1828 thirty-one persons were baptized in Moulmein of whom nine were Burmese men and four Burmese women, two Mon men and two Mon women, one Burmese and seven Mon school girls, one Arakanese and four Indian men. The first Karen, Ko Tha Byu, was accepted by the church but actually baptized in Tavoy. In 1829 twenty-eight more were baptized in Moulmein, including ten British soldiers.

**Three Churches Established.** These two years saw the founding of three churches—the Moulmein Mon-Burmese Church, the 45th Regiment English Church, and the Moulmein Indian Church. For some time the six Indian Christians and their Burmese wives attended the Mon-Burmese Church, but because the men understood so little Burmese, it became necessary to start a congregation in which Tamil could be used. However, the principal Indian member, who had been acting as interpreter, proved to be such an unsteady character that the mission ceased to employ him. After some of the other members had moved away, there was little hope of doing more with this Indian group at that time.

The 45th Regiment English Church was started to serve the English soldiers who were converted by the missionaries. They had morning and evening services on the Lord's Day



with ten to twenty attending, and another service on Friday evenings. This English Church was the beginning of the English-speaking congregation whose beautiful new building in 1963 stands at the corner of Tavoy Jetty and Baho Lanmadaw Roads.

The Mon-Burmese Church grew rapidly, with many of the members being won through zayat contacts. Of these, several should be mentioned individually.

Maung Dwah of Nandawgone Village, already referred to at Amherst, was baptized January 17, 1828. He later accompanied Judson on his mission to Prome. In March a bright young Thai named Maung Shwe Pwint was baptized; he was soon to join the Boardmans and Ko Tha Byu in the Tavoy mission. He was followed on March 30th by Maung En, a very sensible young man from the Koung-zay-kyun Quarter, who, years later, was to succeed U Tha Aye as pastor of the Rangoon Burmese Church at Lanmadaw.

**Nai Myat Kyaw, Outstanding Mon Convert.** Among the Mons, Nai Myat Kyaw deserves special mention. This man was the brother of the first chief of the Koung-zay-kyun District. He was nearly fifty years old, of a respectable family, possessed of a clear mind, considerable eloquence, and an uncommon degree of mental and bodily activity. His literary attainments were scanty, but he had a fine command of the Mon language as used in the higher circles of society. He had long been an inquirer after truth, having carefully investigated Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. At length he embraced the religion of Jesus Christ with all his heart and soul, showing more zeal and ardour than is common among his cool and considerate countrymen. (1853a Wayland 367).

He suffered as much persecution as could be openly inflicted under the British government. All his relations and friends joined in a most appalling cry against him; his wife commenced a divorce suit; and his chieftain-brother publicly declared that if he had the power of life and death, he would instantly wipe out with his blood this disgrace brought



upon the family. Nai Myat Kyaw bore it all with the meekness of a lamb and conducted himself with so much forbearance and Christian love that the tide began to turn in his favour. His wife stopped her suit and began to listen to the word. He gave up all worldly business and devoted himself to assisting the mission work. For this he was particularly fitted by his undissembled humility. He became the first Mon pastor.

**Nai Mehm Boke and Hpwa Tee.** A second Mon couple of great importance to the young church was baptized not long afterwards. The wife, Hpwa Tee, was ready for baptism before her husband, Nai Mehm Boke (Maung Man Poke), but he was not willing for her to go before him. Though they had been a very happy couple for twenty-five years, she told him this was a matter which concerned her eternal interests, that she believed in Christ with all her heart and could not wait for him. She was baptized December 7, 1828, and he on May 29, 1829.

Hpwa Tee was almost unrivalled among the women converts: she seemed to take the place of Ma Min Lay in the Christian group. She always accompanied Mrs. Wade in her visiting, and was most useful in explaining things in Mon to the many who could not understand Burmese.

The Christians considered Nai Mehm Boke one of the most valuable accessions to the cause that they had ever received. Being a fine Mon scholar, he almost at once started translating tracts and hymns into that language, and then continued with Bible translation.

**First School Revival.** Of real interest is the revival which took place during those years at the girls' school. This started with Maung Shwe Bay's twelve year old daughter, Ma Ree (Mary), who had been with the Judsons at Ava. She and her friend, Mee Aye, were deeply touched with Jesus' love and desired to obtain an interest in Christ. But Mee Aye lived in great fear that her mother would come from Amherst and take her away. One morning she came trembling to Mrs. Wade, saying that her mother had just

arriving at the steamer landing: what should she do?

She was told to go and meet her mother, and pray as she went. The poor girl had been praying for her mother ever since she had learned to pray for herself. God heard her prayers and softened her mother's heart. When she heard that her daughter had actually been baptized, she made a face, like a person choking under water and said, "It was so, was it not? I hear that some quite die under the operation." The mother soon settled down at the school, drank in the truth from her daughter's lips, and then followed her example.

Three other Mon school girls were baptized on August 3, 1828: Mee Tan Goung, Mee Nen Mah, and Mee Nen Yay. Mee Tan Goung's mother came to the school early the next morning before any of the teachers were up. She fell on her daughter, abusing and beating her on the head with an umbrella, and threatening to sell her as a slave. She then went to the bazaar where she raised a tumult, shouting that her daughter had entered into a religion which prevented her lying and cheating, so that she was quite lost to the purposes of trade. She also ran to Mee Nen Mah's mother who came in a rage to Mrs. Wade, and after using as bad language as she dared, ran down to the school room, seized her daughter by the hair, and dragged her towards a wood-pile where she would have armed herself with a weapon had not Mrs. Wade rescued the victim. All three girls were taken into the house lest their infuriated relatives should make an assault upon them at night. During the year one Burmese and seven Mon pupils from the school were baptized.

**The Varied Appeal of the Gospel.** It is amazing how the religion of Jesus appealed to all ages. On June 7, 1829, Hpwa Hla, a woman eighty years old, was baptized. She was the mother-in-law of a petty chief who had been opposing the young church most bitterly. This venerable woman severed all the ties which bound her to a large circle of relatives and friends, hazarding the loss of a comfortable old age and the loss of character, throwing herself on charity, all for the sake of the "Lord who saves from sin." Her

daughter, Ma Min, and her son-in-law took her in, however, and soon changed their whole attitude towards the church. This woman was the mother of Dr. Shaw Lu (Saul) who, as a young man, was the first Burman to go to America to study in Bucknell University.

Those three years in Amherst and Moulmein saw the beginning of the diversification of the church and the reaching out to those with languages other than Burmese: to the Karens through Ko Tha Byu, to the Indians, the British soldiers, and the Mons. Down through the years Burmese-speaking Mon Christians have enriched the growth of Burmese churches. It is even said that U Naw, the first Burman to be baptized, was actually a Mon.



## 10 The Mission to Tavoy— Beginning of Witness to the Karens

1828-1833

With three missionary families and two experienced Burmese leaders in Moulmein, Judson had the feeling that leadership was becoming too concentrated—like the roots of a pot-bound plant. He was opposed to excessive concentration of effort in Moulmein or any other place. He worked to get missionaries and national leaders to occupy every promising field in order that, like newly transplanted bamboo stalks, new centres of growth might be established.

**Tavoy Picked as New Station.** On an evening in March 1828, all the members of the mission were talking together on the large front verandah of the mission bungalow about this very question of establishing a branch mission outside of Moulmein. With Maung Ing's advice based on his earlier missionary journey down the coast, Tavoy was selected as the location for the transplant.

But who was to go? Of the missionaries it seemed that the young Boardmans, who already had a working knowledge of Burmese, were the ones best fitted. It was a somewhat more difficult problem to decide which of the Burmans should accompany the missionaries. Maung Ing was the logical person since he had already visited Tavoy, but since he was capable of working alone, he was assigned as pastor at Amherst, being ordained in February 1829. (From this point on, we shall refer to him as U Ing rather than Maung Ing.)

Two other names were suggested, that of the newly baptized Maung Shwe Pwint and that of the Karen, Ko Tha Byu, who had been accepted by the church but not yet baptized. There was

quick agreement on the former, but Mr. Wade hesitated to include the latter who had so recently been a robber and murderer. He recommended that the Karen should have a somewhat longer period of probation and training in which to demonstrate his new life. The Boardmans, however, were willing to have him included in the party since they got along well with him, and since U Ing had reported a large number of Karens as living in the jungles to the east of Tavoy.

To this party of four adults were added four of the boys who had been studying in the boys' school which Mr. Boardman had been conducting in Moulmein. Their embarkation from the Moulmein water front on March 29th was quite an affair with all the church members and inquirers present to see them off.

**Ko Tha Byu, First Karen Christian.** The ship landed this little party in Tavoy at the beginning of the hottest time of year. They built a house of bamboo and thatch and a small school just outside the north gate of the town. There they settled down to their new and challenging tasks. One of the very first of these was the baptism on May 16th of Ko Tha Byu whose rough and undisciplined genius, energy, and zeal for Christ were

*The Boardmans, Maung Pwint, and Ko Tha Byu sail for Tavoy.*





to make him one of the most effective pioneers in the Karen mission. (1848 Judson 52,68).

Immediately after his baptism, Ko Tha Byu started out early one morning to preach the gospel to his countrymen in the jungle. The minah birds were noisy, and overhead the hornbills flew in grotesque flocks from the hills to the islets. A hundred gibbons invisible in the distant forest, screamed with delight. Ko Tha Byu made his way up the steep mountain trail, now wading in the creek bed and then taking to a dry shoulder of a ridge until he finally reached a Karen village perched precariously on the edge of a gorge through which leaped a mountain stream. There he stopped to spend the night. The neighbours gathered around him in the evening, under the impression that he would trace his genealogy to show that he was not an enemy but a relation, for with the Karens a stranger may be also an enemy. They were surprised to learn the subject of his mission and listened with great intentness, for the message which Ko Tha Byu brought fitted so well with their traditions of God and the lost book which was to be brought back to them by the white brother.

**Saw Quala, Second Karen Convert.** A young man named Saw Quala or "Hope", was particularly touched: he believed when he first heard the gospel message. His father, a proud and bitter man, sternly forbade his son to have anything to do with the stranger and the religion he preached, but his mother quietly accepted the gospel. Dr. Francis Mason says of her, "I have seen many agreeable Karen women, but never one who made so deep and lasting an impression on my mind as Quala's mother. If ever a human being accepted the gospel as glad tidings, she did. Were I an artist, called upon to depict Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, I should immediately transfer her to the canvas." (1856 Mason 2). The father's opposition was so strong that Quala had to go and live with an older half brother on the other side of the mountain.

Were the human mind an acorn, Christianity would be the soil that develops the oak. The knowledge of God is no sooner acquired than a burning thirst for other knowledge is evolved. So soon as Quala became a praying Christian, he wished to learn



to read so that he could understand the tracts that Ko Tha Byu had brought. Since at that time there were no Karen books, he had to struggle to learn Burmese which was to him, beyond a few colloquial phrases, a foreign language. At night after the day's strenuous work with his brother in the mountain fields was over, he studied Burmese and learned to read by a smoky wood-oil lamp, reminding us of a young man in America named Lincoln, who, after the day's work, was getting his education by firelight at about the same time.

Finally, in the autumn of 1830, several young Karens in the neighbourhood decided to go to Tavoy, and Quala accompanied them. There in December he was baptized with eighteen others by U Ing.

With a converted Karen, preaching the gospel is a spontaneous act. He no more thinks of asking for a license to preach than he does for a license to pray. As soon as Quala had commenced to read, he began to explain the Christian books to all he met. His mother and his brother engaged his first attention. When his father listened and opposed, he replied to all his arguments in the words of scripture. All whom he encountered, Karens and Burmans, had to hear him tell what a dear Saviour he had found, and have it demonstrated, from the books he carried in his bag, that he was a Saviour to all who believed.

**The Boardmans' Work in Tavoy.** Meanwhile Mr. Boardman had repaired an old zayat in Tavoy and begun public preaching after the tested Rangoon and Moulmein pattern. Mrs. Boardman started both boys' and girls' schools which proved to be very popular.

Mr. Boardman's busy programme in town was interrupted from time to time with preaching trips to jungle villages. The first such trip he made in February 1829 was most worthwhile but strenuous and exhausting. Over streams and ravines almost impassable, up hill and down he went. Tigers crouching among the rocks, and mischievous chattering monkeys swinging in branches overhead, huge mountains stretching far into the clouds with wild streamlets dashing from rock to rock down their precipitous sides, and far below the calm Palouk rolling slowly to its des-

tionation like the river of a good man's life—among these scenes he went, preaching the word of God in the remotest villages. He came home rather gaunt and thin, and with eyes deep-set from fatigue. He found his wife sick with dysentery, a disease which had repeatedly sapped her strength since her first arrival in Burma. Only little Sarah seemed well and plump, but by July she had taken sick and died.

Added to those troubles was the revolt of the Tavoyans in August 1829. As the population rose and lawlessness spread, the Boardmans had to seek safety together with the few officials and the Indian and Chinese foreign residents—a party of some four hundred persons—in a large wooden building on the wharf where they managed to hold off the attackers until a steamer from Moulmein arrived bringing Colonel Burney, the officer in charge of Tavoy who had been absent at the time of the uprising. It was not long till order was re-established.

The experiences left their mark on Mr. Boardman whose worsening case of tuberculosis was soon to cause his death. At the beginning of 1830 when Mrs. Boardman was critically ill, they went to Moulmein where she recovered her strength, but Mr. Boardman grew slowly weaker.

When they returned to Tavoy in November, they were welcomed with affection by the Burmese, Chinese, and Karen disciples. (1848 Judson 83). Before they had been home a fortnight, a party of Karens came from the jungle to visit the teacher and hear the gospel. It was the group which has already been mentioned on the previous page, which included the young Saw Quala. They remained four days listening eagerly to Mr. Boardman's instructions. Sometimes the teacher was strong enough to sit in a chair, but more often his wife had to interpret his feeble whispers from his sickbed. The day before they left Tavoy, nineteen were baptized. Mr. Boardman was carried on his cot by the Karens to a beautiful pond, nearly a mile in circumference, and bordered by green trees. There they stopped—a party about fifty in number—and, kneeling on the grass, implored the divine blessing. Then U Ing, who had come from Rangoon, administered the ordinance of baptism to the nineteen



young Karens. Saw Quala, the first Karen to be won by Ko Tha Byu's preaching, was the sixteenth Karen to be baptized. For the next two decades he and Ko Tha Byu were to do much to win their countrymen to Christ.

**Francis Mason Describes Boardman's Last Jungle Trip.** (1856 Mason). In January 1831 the Boardmans were joined by a new missionary family which had just arrived in Burma, Rev. and Mrs. Francis Mason. They were to be a great comfort to Mrs. Boardman in the sad days directly ahead, and then continue to the midcentury in the work of evangelizing the Karens and translating the scriptures into the Sgaw Karen language.

Eight days after the Masons' arrival, Mr. Boardman made one last trip to the Karen wilderness. Francis Mason made one of the party. On this trip to the foot of the mountain range, the new missionary was to get an indelible impression of mission work, and make the acquaintance of Saw Quala who was to become his language teacher and most valued fellow worker in the years ahead. He tells of their first meeting:

"I first met him three or four weeks after his baptism when a party of Karens came in to Tavoy to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Boardman out to the jungle. They were the first Karens I had seen. Whenever we met, in town, by the way, and at our encampment, I improved the leisure moments by asking the Karen nearest to me the names of objects in his language, and noted down the answers. I soon found that one young man was always near me to reply to my queries, and on asking his name was told, "Maung Shatoo". This proved to be the Burman name for Saw Quala, and the only name by which he was known in the mission for several years."

Mr. Mason's description of the scene at the foot of the mountain range continues: "While encamped in the forest, examining the candidates who came crowding for baptism—the last act of Mr. Boardman's missionary life, the first of mine—we had three meetings daily; and Quala, his mother,



and his sister were ever the first to come and the last to go away...They proved most valuable assistants to Mrs. Boardman in waiting upon her dying husband. When the day arrived that Mr. Boardman's failing strength gave warning that he was about to be taken from us, and we must pause in our pleasant labours, for he was literally dying in his pulpit,... Quala with the other Karens lifted up his couch and laid him down beneath the tall wood-oil trees. The mountains which he was the first to cross with the message of salvation, loomed up before him,...while the stream whose noisy bubbling sources had been his pathway through the gorges, rested at his feet in a quiet cove, and formed a transparent baptistry, encircled by an amphitheatre of floating water-lilies, where thirty-four of those for whose salvation he had prayed and laboured, were baptized in his presence—the largest number that had ever been baptized at one time in the mission, perhaps in India, on a profession of faith.

"Another sun; and as another rose, his converts stood with him a few miles lower down on the stream; but when they looked to place him in the canoe that was waiting for him, "He was not, for God had taken him."

"The same hands bore him to his garden sepulchre, and laid him down at the steps of his little oratory where he had prayed into existence the Karen mission."

**Mrs. Boardman Decides to Continue Alone.** After her husband's death, Mrs. Boardman decided to stay in Tavoy to carry on the mission work which was developing so promisingly. Mr. Judson wrote encouraging her to stay, promising to take the responsibilities of a father for her little son, George. Thus, Sarah Boardman became the first lone "female missionary" to carry on work in Burma. Before long she could write to a friend, "Every moment of my time is occupied, from sunrise till ten o'clock in the evening... The Karens are beginning to come to us in companies; and with them, our scholars in town, and the care of my darling boy, you will scarce think that I have much leisure for letter writing."

Mrs. Boardman was soon joined by Ma Doke and Ma Min from Moulmein who proved most helpful. U Ing, too, remained in Tavoy to share the burden of responsibility. By the end of the year the church had 110 members, mostly Karens who lived at a distance.

In April 1831 Mrs. Boardman reopened the day schools which had been closed since the time of the rebellion. When it was reported in 1833 that the Bengal government did not approve of teaching Christian scriptures in schools receiving government grant, Mrs. Boardman wrote the commissioner, Mr. Maingy, that, rather than give up this most important part of the syllabus, the Christian schools would forego the grants. Mr. Maingy's letter is worth quoting.

"I cannot do otherwise than honour and respect the sentiments conveyed in your letter now received. You will, I hope, give me credit for sincerity when I assure you that in alluding to the system of instruction pursued by you, it has ever been a source of pride to me to point out the quiet way in which your scholars have been made acquainted with the Christian religion. My own government in no way proscribes the teaching of Christianity. The observations in my official letter are intended to support what I have before brought to the notice of the government, that *all* are received who present themselves for instruction at your schools, without any stipulation as to their becoming members of the Christian faith.

"I cannot express to you how much your letter has distressed me. It has been a subject of consideration with me for some months past, how I could best succeed in establishing a college here, the scholars of which were to have been instructed on the same system which you have so successfully pursued. Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

A. D. Maingy"

Mrs. Boardman's firmness on this occasion bore fruit, for an appropriation was afterwards obtained for government schools throughout the province, "to be conducted on the plan of Mrs. Boardman's schools at Tavoy." Although the teaching of Christianity was later prohibited, *she* was always allowed to teach as her conscience dictated. (1848 Judson 118).

So we leave Tavoy with the church well planted and growing, with Mrs. Boardman, Ma Doke, Ma Min, U Ing, Mr. and Mrs. Mason, Ko Tha Byu, and Saw Quala carrying the gospel message to the remotest village.

## 11 Renewed Efforts Within the Burman Empire

1823-1831

**Judson's Period of Heart-searching.** Back in Moulmein following the first departure of the Boardmans for Tavoy in 1828, the daily work proceeded very much as usual, and on the surface all appeared to be normal. But Mr. Judson was going through a period of bitter heart-searching which lasted for months. On October 24, the second anniversary of Ann's death, he moved from the mission house into a hut in the woods.

He seemed to feel that in going to Ava the last time he had deserted Ann in her time of great need. Although she had encouraged him to go, yet she evidently feared that he might be tempted to give up his mission work and, like Mr. Hough and Dr. Price, go into government service, for just before her death, she asked that he be urged to continue in mission work.

On the second anniversary of Ann's death, he realized that he did very much enjoy mingling with British officers who valued his knowledge of Burma so highly. He felt a need to deny himself this pleasure if he were truly to take up the cross and follow Christ. He therefore gave up all social engagements in British society, wrote to Brown University refusing an honorary doctor's degree which had been given him, wrote his family in America to destroy all his correspondence which might be used at some later date as a basis for praising his work as a missionary, and asked the Mission Board to reduce his salary as he no longer needed the whole amount.



Other things, too, were bothering his honest subconscious self. Ann had been taken from him and his three children: why? In Judson's day the answer to this question was usually based on the belief that God is loving and good, and could they only see clearly, every occurrence no matter how heart-rending, would appear as the expression of God's perfect love. Must he, too, decide that infinite wisdom and love had presided when his loved one was taken from him and her work for God stopped? The basic honesty of this man would not let him be satisfied with an answer that seemed out of keeping with God's love as expressed through Jesus Christ. This rebellion of his mind made him seek anew to find God and his will.

As a student in Andover he had felt that the secret of living a holy life was the avoidance of everything that would displease God and grieve the Holy Spirit. Now he was not so sure that the negative way was the right approach. To General Campbell, who was leaving Burma for good, he wrote, "True religion...consists not in attachment to any particular church, nor in observance of any particular form of worship, nor does it consist in a mere abstinence from flagrant crimes, a mere conformity to the rules of honesty and honour."

But if true religion did not consist in negation, then what was its positive nature? Could he find God anew and learn his will? On the hillside he dug a hole like a grave and sat beside it in monk-like meditation on suffering and death, but the Lord was not in the grave and no still small voice spoke to him. He went daily to a remote spot in the jungle where for forty days he tried to find God in ascetic contemplation, but God did not speak to him from the surrounding lush vegetation. He wrote to his sister, "Have either of you learned the art of real communion with God, and can teach me the first principles? God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him but I cannot find him". (1853a Wayland 390).

As the third anniversary of Ann's death rolled around,

Judson shifted his little hermitage closer to the mission house where he often took his meals with the Wades. He began to feel again the healing power of Christian love. He might never be able to find the Great Unknown, but he did know and love his Son, Jesus Christ, who went about healing the sick and raising the dead to life. He had never refused to heal; to him, suffering and death were not a part of his Father's will but always something to be removed. For this Great Physician, the missionaries and Burman Christians were willing to deny themselves and spend their lives in service.

Back in the world of suffering and need, the still small voice was beginning to speak to Judson: the Son who was the express image of the Father had come to heal so that all might have life. He had given the command that his followers love one another as he had loved them.

Judson wrote again to his sister, "Let us depend on it, that nothing but real faith in Christ, *proved to be genuine by a holy life*, can support us at last. That faith which consists merely in a correct belief of the doctrines of grace and prompts to no self-denial—that faith which allows us to spend all our days in serving self, content with merely refraining from outward sins, and attending to the ordinary duties of religion—is not faith at all."

In 1831 Judson was to look back on this period and express doubts as to the value of all *self-imposed* austerities. He came to feel that Christian self-denial consisted rather in bearing patiently and gratefully all the inconveniences and pain which God in his providence might bring upon us, without our attempting to remove them unless destructive to life or health or our capacity for usefulness.

So it was that Christ's love, and the human love of the Wades and other Moulmein Christians brought Judson back again to preach Christ and lead men and women to a holy and self-denying life of service which would prove their faith genuine.

U Tha Aye Leads the Rangoon Church. During this



period the forward movement of the Christian church was not confined to the British-held sections of Burma. At about the same time that the Boardmans and Ko Tha Byu went to Tavoy in March 1828, word reached Moulmein that U Tha Aye, one of the last of the Nandawgon group to be baptized before the war, was back in Rangoon where a number of the old inquirers were listening to his instructions. (1853a Wayland 363).

At the end of the war in 1826 he had spent a few months in Inma Village across the river from Prome. There he preached very effectively and produced quite a stir. Several of the villagers professed to believe in Christ, and three of the most promising, he baptized. Some others soon requested baptism, but he became alarmed at his own rashness for baptizing without sanction and consequently refused to grant their repeated requests.

After conditions had settled down somewhat, U Tha Aye returned to Rangoon where he continued to spread the truth but in a more cautious manner. His letter to Mr. Judson dated April 20, 1828, gave the names of thirteen men and three women who were disciples of Christ in Rangoon, though rather secretly for fear of public reaction. Among these were some of the pre-war inquirers including Saya U Aung Det of Kambe Village, and Dr. U Yan of Nandawgon. U Tha Aye was demonstrating that it was quite possible for Christian work to go on in the Burman-controlled section of the country.

On November 2, U Tha Aye paid a short visit to Moulmein to find out what to do with those who wished to be baptized, and to get instructions concerning his own duties as acting pastor. After the Moulmein group had consulted, it was so evident that he had been called of God to the ministry that there was no need to delay his ordination. This took place on January 4, 1829, just eighteen days before the ordination of U Ing which has already been recorded. If it had been left to the mission group to select one of all the converts to be the first ordained Christian



pastor among his countrymen, U Tha Aye is the man they would have chosen. His age (57 years), his steadiness and weight of character, his attainments in Burmese literature, and his humble devotedness to the sacred work, all combined to make him the ideal pastor.

Pastor U Tha Aye left Moulmein on January 11th to return to his church in Rangoon. Judson recorded, "We love him like a brother missionary—a humble, conscientious, faithful servant of the Lord Jesus. During his visit he has endeared himself to all of us; and we should gladly retain him here were he not so evidently called to another part of the vineyard." (1853a Wayland 377).

Back in Rangoon Pastor U Tha Aye divided his time between Rangoon and the surrounding villages of Pazundaung, Nandawgon, Kambe, and Ananbin. One inquirer after another was helped by the pastor so that the little Rangoon church grew almost as rapidly as that in Moulmein where the missionaries were working. It is fitting to point out that this Rangoon church with its own pastor was self-supporting and self-directing from this early period when Karen work was scarcely begun.

Nandawgon Village was still supplying new members to the young church: nephews of Ma Min Lay and of Pastor Tha Aye were baptized in August. But Dr. U Yan, who had once been very near the kingdom, had died without ever making up his mind.

Meanwhile the progress in Amherst had been very slow since that community was decreasing in importance after the administrative centre of government shifted to Moulmein. Pastor U Ing was therefore moved to Rangoon to help U Tha Aye.

**Arrival of Cephas Bennett, Educator and Printer.** Missionary reinforcements had reached Moulmein in January 1830 in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. Cephas Bennett and their two children. Mr. Bennett was an educator and printer who was to do the work dropped by Mr. Hough when he entered government service in 1824. The Bennetts were warmly

welcomed because there had been no one able to do printing in Burma since the war. The Burmese New Testament, as revised by Judson and Wade, was ready for printing as well as a large number of pamphlets, Bible portions, and textbooks.

**Missionaries Settle in Rangoon Again.** The arrival of the new couple made it possible for the Wades to move to Rangoon in February to help the rapidly expanding work in that city. Soon after their arrival there, Mrs. Wade wrote, "I have been surrounded with visitors almost all the time since we arrived, and feel it such a luxury to have all the women understand and speak good Burmese!...We are much pleased with the state of things here, and think that God is with our native brother and the little church."

Judson viewed this experiment of re-entering Burman-controlled Burma with fear and trembling, for his great hope was to be able to win Burma for Christ. Moulmein and Tenasserim were geographically a part of Burma, but their population was more Mon and Karen than Burmese. The Wades were eager to have Judson join them to help with the work both in Rangoon and the interior of the country. Their invitation appealed strongly to him, but he could not leave Moulmein at once because there were at least five inquirers who were close to decision. But when the Boardmans arrived in Moulmein in the spring of 1830 for medical treatment, Judson transferred his responsibilities to them and sailed for Rangoon where he stayed with the Wades in their rented house in the midst of the town.

The governor of the city, a former Atwinwun in Ava (see p. 43) received Judson very kindly and invited him to stay under his protection. Judson soon made contacts with other Ava acquaintances such as U Tha Tay, a person of some rank whom he had known in Sagaing and who was an intimate friend of the Governor of the North Gate, Judson's old protector. Judson found the spirit of inquiry to be more prevalent and more boldly indulged in than formerly. He felt that the church had reason to thank God for all the



past, and take courage for the time to come.

**Missionary Journey to Prome.** Judson had not been in Rangoon long before he felt that God wanted him to move to the interior of the country, away from the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of the port city where the Wades and Pastor U Tha Aye were already handling the work in a satisfactory manner. Judson, accompanied by U Ing, Ko En, Maung Dway, Maung Dan, and little Maung Like therefore embarked on May 29th for Prome, the great halfway place between Rangoon and Ava. U Tha Aye would have liked to go along, too, but there were so many inquirers that he could not leave them. Judson says of him at that time, "He is as solicitous and busy as a hen pressing about her chicks. It is quite refreshing to hear him talk on the subject, and see what a nice, careful old shepherd he makes. The Lord bless his soul and the souls of his flock." (1853a Wayland 394).

On their way up the river the boat made frequent stops where the party could go ashore to preach and distribute tracts. Judson usually began by reading from a tract or catechism, and after reading and talking a little, and getting listeners to feel friendly, he offered one tract to the most attentive auditor present. When he seemed reluctant to give to every person, and on making them promise to read attentively, consider, and pray, they got very eager to obtain a tract. Many hands were stretched out and, "Give me one! Give me one!" resounded from all sides. Because of the small stock of tracts then available, the party did have to ration the tracts as best they could.

As they went further up the river, this interest seemed to increase. They were bothered so much at night stops that the boat's captain pushed off into the stream to get rid of the annoyance. Till long after dark, people kept coming to the bank and calling, "Teacher, are you asleep? We want a writing to get by heart." On being told that they might have one if they came to get it, they contrived to push off a long canoe until they got close enough to reach the tract



held out to them in a split at the end of a long bamboo pole.

During the evening the captain went ashore; he reported that in almost every house there was someone at a lamp, reading aloud one of the Christian pamphlets. Already the little party had given away a quarter of all the literature they had brought along. A message had to be sent to Mr. Bennett at the first opportunity asking for reprints.

The party passed by Kanoung, Myanoung, and Kyangin without stopping, and also Shwedaung, the former home of Maung Shwe Bay, one of the most populous places on the river. Near this place was the residence of the Toungdwin Saya, the head of the deistic sect of which U Shwe Ngong had been a leading example. At Minywa U Ing went ashore and found one of the prewar disciples, Ma May Zu. She had won several other women to her faith and begged the group from the boat to visit their village, but found that the men of the village were afraid to entertain a foreigner lest, in case of further war with the British, they should be involved.

Judson found this fear to be widespread in the neighbourhood of Prome; the people were afraid to have any connection with a foreigner. Since Major Burney had gone up to Ava a few weeks before, the country had been full of all sorts of rumours and fears. The very face of a white man spread general alarm. Judson realized that this strong feeling would prevent their accomplishing as much as they had hoped.

When the boat arrived in Prome, Judson stayed for a short time with the only European residing there, but on finding that the people considered this man a spy, Judson secured permission from the government officers to live in a dilapidated zayat, provided he would fence it off from the rest of the pagoda grounds. At first the officers were quite friendly, but they soon began questioning whether Judson, too, might not be a spy.

U Ing, returning from a visit to some of the neighbouring villages, where he stopped overnight with the famous Toungdwin

Saya, reported that in the present state of the public mind there was not a house where the owner would dare to ask a foreigner to sit down at the entrance.

On July 9th the Christian team agreed that two or three of their number should go out every day in different directions, and preach the gospel whether people would listen or not. Judson's lot fell in a public zayat near the Shwe San Daw Pagoda where an uninterrupted succession of people listened from morning till night. U Ing and Maung Dway were successfully engaged in another quarter, while Maung En had some company in the old zayat where they lived. Probably one hundred and fifty people that day heard the gospel intelligibly who had never heard it before. Considering the general public feeling, they made much more of an impression than was to be expected. There were a number of sincere inquirers and widespread interest.

Government opposition, however, was growing. Judson was called to the court and examined as to his activities in Burma, the report being forwarded to Ava. With this official opposition, only the more bold dared to show any interest in the preaching. Judson records, "You have no idea of the fear of the government which pervades all classes." (1853a Wayland 404).

Towards the end of August, word came that the Wades were planning to return to Moulmein because of the declining health of Mr. Boardman. This news coincided with mounting pressure in both Prome and Ava. So, in spite of the fact that the secretary of the deputy governor, U Kywet Ni, was becoming a very promising inquirer, plans were made to embark for Rangoon.

Judson and the three disciples pushed off in their own little boat on September 18th, leaving U Kywet Ni sitting alone on the water's edge, lamenting their departure. His parting words were, "Mark me as your disciple; I pray to God every day; do you also pray for me. As soon as I can get free from my present engagements, I intend to come down to Rangoon."

These three and a half months in Prome were a source of real satisfaction to Judson. He had carried the gospel message into the heart of the Empire without official protection or sanc-



tion, where Christ had never before been preached. They had gone into the heart of the great city and expounded the truth of the Great Eternal in language which was intelligible to all ranks of people, and some had listened and believed.

In a passage reminiscent of the Apostle Paul, Judson bid farewell to Prome: "Farewell to thee, Promel Willingly would I have spent my last breath in thee and for thee. But thy sons ask me not to stay; and I must preach the gospel to other cities also, for therefore am I sent. Read the five hundred tracts that I have left for thee. Pray to the God and Saviour that I have told thee of. And if hereafter thou call me, though in the lowest whisper, and it reach me in the very extremity of the Empire, I will joyfully listen and come back to thee." (1853a Wayland 407).

**Opposition Increases in Rangoon.** Back in Rangoon Judson found that the public attitude had stiffened to Christian teaching. At one time, men were stationed a little distance on either side of the mission house to threaten those who visited Pastor U Tha Aye and the Wades, and to take away any tracts they had received. Reports were circulated that the government was about to make a public example of heretics. The crowds that had been coming for tracts disappeared for a time, and U Tha Aye moved to his own small house where he would be less conspicuous. From Ava the king ordered Judson to confine his activities to Rangoon.

**Use of Christian Tracts.** In spite of official opinion, plans went on for the work in the port city. Judson sent urgent letters to Moulmein during the autumn asking Mr. Bennett to print and send more of the tracts called *The View of the Christian Religion*, *The Catechism of Religion*, and Wade's *Investigator*. Of these they needed thousands of copies. From experience they found that the value of the *Balance* was doubled when an illustrated cover was added. A little later they found that the *Investigator* was a bit too straightforward for the state of the public mind at that time and so distributed it less freely. The *Balance* seemed to give less offense.

In addition to these four basic tracts, they needed several thousand copies of the Gospel of Luke. The little 2-page tracts



containing only a scrap of the scripture were considered to be almost useless because they gave such an inadequate idea of the Christian religion. Judson regretted every minute the presses were used to produce such "scrippets".

The future of Christian work in Rangoon was so uncertain that Judson wanted a constant stream of literature to flow from the Moulmein presses while there were people in Rangoon to distribute it. For Rangoon—not Moulmein—was the key to the country. From this port city, tracts were carried to every part of the Empire. Some visitors came two or three months journey from the borders of Siam and China, saying, "Sir, we have heard that there is an eternal hell; we are afraid of it. Do give us a writing that will show us how to escape it."

Others came from the frontiers of Kathay, a hundred miles north of Ava: "Sir, we have seen a writing that tells about an eternal God. Are you the man who gives away such writings? If so, pray give us one, for we want to know the truth before we die." Others came from the interior of the country where the name of Jesus was little known: "Are you Jesus Christ's man? Give us a writing that tells about Jesus Christ."

Judson was convinced that Burma was to be evangelized by tracts and portions of the scriptures, for the people were a reading people beyond any other in the Indian area. He considered the press as the *grand engine* for Burma.

Between callers, Judson worked upstairs in his house at completing the translation of the Psalms which he had begun three years before. Following Psalms he took up the Song of Solomon, Daniel, Isaiah, Genesis, and the first part of Exodus.

Downstairs some of the assistants distributed tracts to the visitors, taking only the more hopeful ones upstairs. These people returned from this Christian Centre to all parts of the country with "the light in their heads, the love in their hearts, and the truth in their hands" which could act as leaven in the whole lump. By the end of the year the Centre was giving away a thousand tracts every three days and ten thousand at festival times—and only to those who asked for them.

**A Brave Old Woman.** Even though public opposition was

strong, some dared to follow Christ. One, an old woman of seventy-four who had met with violent opposition from a host of children and grandchildren, was for a time confined. At last she was baptized by stealth. On her return from the water in wet clothes, she suddenly met three of her sons, grown men, who were suspecting some mischief. At first she thought of avoiding them, but feeling very happy that she was now a full disciple, the matter of life and death, of praise and blame, became of no importance to her. She met them courageously and to their rude question, "What have you been about, mother?" she mildly and promptly replied, "I have been baptized into the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ." The young men were astonished but, contrary to her fears, refrained from abusing her, and let her proceed home quietly as if nothing had happened.

**National Leadership Increases.** U Ing left Rangoon by the middle of November 1830 to accompany the Boardmans back to Tavoy where he arrived in time to baptize young Saw Quala. (See pp. 69-70.) Ko En took over his responsibilities in Rangoon as he was well qualified to meet visitors. He bore with a smile the floods of abuse which were sometimes poured on him. He was never so much in his element as when surrounded by a large group, some approving and some contradicting.

His wife, Ma Nen Yay, taught a small school for children, thus following the example of Ma Min Lay who had started the first Christian school for children in Rangoon (see p. 33). Maung San Lone was developing into a valuable assistant along with Ko En. During 1830 seven persons were baptized in Rangoon, twelve at Moulmein, of whom five were Europeans, and twenty-eight at Tavoy, making a total of forty-seven.

Although the demand for tracts had fallen off rather sharply during the hot season of 1831, yet Judson still gave away between forty and fifty during his morning walks. The spirit of inquiry seemed to be spreading, and the mission house was frequently crowded with company. In order to get time for his Bible translation, Judson had to leave most of the visitors to the efficient Ko En.

The Rangoon government tried to preserve an attitude of



neutrality towards the Christian group. When the Christians were once accused before the viceroy, his excellency rejected the accusation with indignation, not because he was favourably disposed towards the Christian religion but because he wished to preserve peace.

**Boardman's Death.** The news of Boardman's death in Tavoy (see p. 73) reached Judson in Rangoon in February 1831. The loss of this consecrated and capable co-worker who, with the help of his wife and Ko Tha Byu, had baptized seventy Karens in three years, was a great loss to the church and a personal loss to Judson. Boardman's death emphasized the need for more workers not only among the Burmese, Mons, and Karens, but also among the Arakanese on the west coast and the Shans in the large mountainous area east of Ava.

**More Missionaries.** Fortunately there were three new families who had lately arrived and who were busy at language study. These three—the Francis Masons, the Eugenio Kincaids, and the John T. Jones—were to prove capable and far-ranging reinforcements. The first couple, as we have already noted on page 72, was assigned to Tavoy where they served till 1852 when, with Saw Quala, they pioneered the newly opened Toungoo and Karen Hills area. The Kincaids were to serve not only in Moulmein and Rangoon but also in such distant spots as Ava, Akyab, and Prome. The Jones family after a year in Burma was transferred to Bangkok, Siam, where they opened Christian work and continued for eighteen years.

But with three churches and a membership of nearly 200 disciples, still more missionaries were needed. Judson wrote on March 4, 1831, "Oh, if we had about twenty more versed in the language, and means to spread schools, and tracts, and Bibles,—how happy I would be!" (1853a Wayland 428).

**Evangelistic Outreach from Rangoon.** Several of the Rangoon disciples made trips to the surrounding delta towns. Maung Shwe Doke went up the Hlaing River to the north into a populous area where the gospel had never yet been preached. Maung Tsan Lon with 2500 tracts went to Pegu on the east, while Maung Shwe Tu visited the large towns of Pantanaw and



Bassein on the west. By these trips of the Burmese disciples to the districts and the visits of people from the districts to the Christian Centre in Rangoon, the news of Christ was being widely disseminated in Burman-ruled Burma.

In June 1831 word reached Rangoon that Mrs. Wade was critically ill in Moulmein, with little chance of recovery unless she returned to America. The missionaries were unanimous in urging Mr. Wade to accompany his wife. During their absence Judson was asked to return to Moulmein since no missionary left there could speak Burmese fluently except Mrs. Bennett who had begun to take charge of the women's work. Judson agreed provided one of the new families would be transferred to Rangoon.

The eighteen months experiment of conducting mission work in Burmese-controlled Burma had shown that it was possible, and that the government would permit missionaries to live in Rangoon though not in district towns such as Prome. Official disapproval prevented large numbers from responding openly, but the seed was being scattered and tracts were being read privately in thousands of homes.

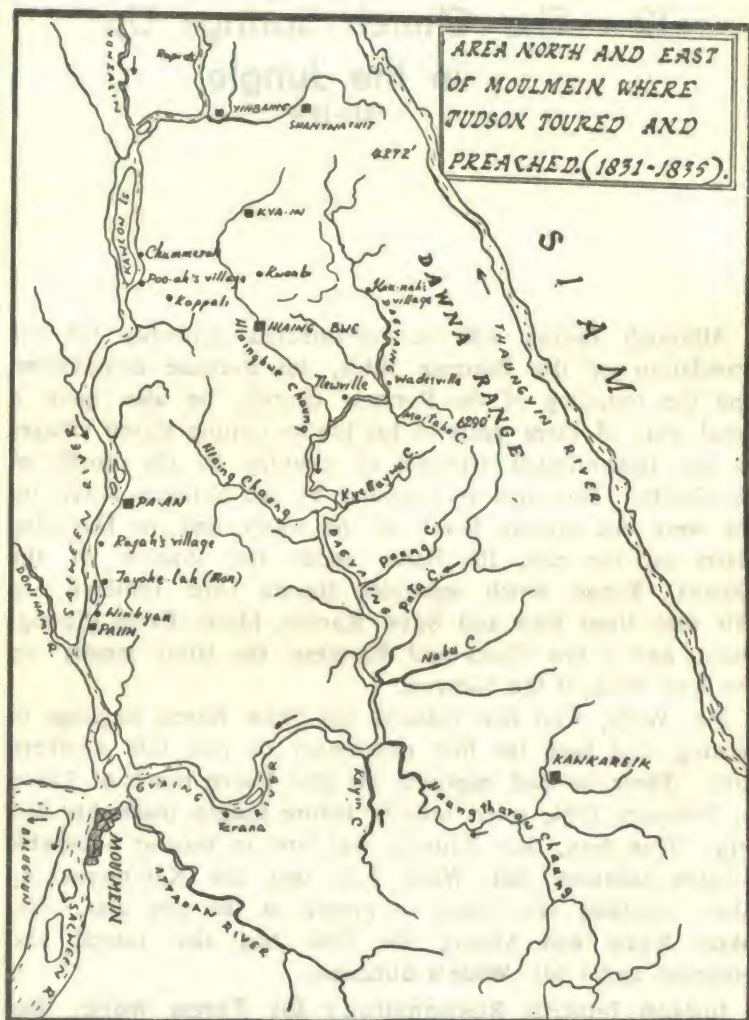
## 12 The Church Springs Up in the Jungle

1831-1834

Although Judson will be remembered primarily for his translation of the Burmese Bible, his Burmese dictionaries, and the founding of the Burmese church, he also gave a good part of three years of his life to visiting Karen villages in the tiger-infested triangle of country to the north of Moulmein. This area is bounded by the Salween River on the west, the Gyaing River on the south, and the Dagaing River on the east, the latter under the shadow of the Dawna Range which separates Burma from Thailand. In this area lived Pwo and Sgaw Karens, Mons, Pa-os (Taungthus), and a few Shans and Burmese, the latter mostly on the west bank of the Salween.

Mr. Wade, who had reduced the Sgaw Karen language to writing, had been the first missionary to visit this northern area. There he had baptized the first Karen north of Tavoy in February 1831, seven months before Judson made his first trip. This man, Saw Taunah, was later to become a capable mission assistant. Mr. Wade had sent the Karen-speaking Mon assistant, Nai Doot, to preach in the new area. Nai Myat Kyaw and Maung Zu Thee had also toured and preached under Mr. Wade's direction.

Judson Inherits Responsibility for Karen work. But during the rains of 1831 Mrs. Wade's poor health required that the Wades leave Burma for her treatment. Judson came back from Rangoon to take their place and thus inherited the responsibility for Karen evangelistic work. Back in his early days in Rangoon, Judson had sometimes seen passing the



Judson spent most of his life preaching in towns and cities, but he gave three years of his life to visiting and preaching in jungle villages north and east of Moulmein.



zayat small parties of strange-looking men dressed in sack-like costumes. He was told that they were Karens; that they were more numerous than any other similar tribe in the vicinity, that they shrank from association with other men, seldom entering towns, and that any attempt to bring them within the sphere of his influence was useless. But since he had lead Ko Tha Byu to Christ, and since the Boardmans and Ko Tha Byu had been so successful in winning Karen disciples in Tavoy, and since Mr. Wade's reduction of their language to writing, this early impression of the Karens had been considerably changed.

**He Makes Five Tours to the Karen Jungles.** Judson's chosen field was the zayat, but now he was to make five trips extending through three years to the Karen, Mon, and Pa-o jungle villages by large canoe. These missionary journeys were by no means safe or easy. Malaria was everywhere and Judson already had the parasites in his blood. On his first trip in September 1831 to the headwaters of the Dagaing or Hlaingbwe River about eighty miles, or five days journey, from Moulmein, he came down with fever and had to be brought back to Moulmein to recover. At other times, if they did not reach a village willing to shelter them for the night, the party had to curl up and sleep on the hard boards of the canoe because tigers were too numerous to permit them to sleep in the open on the shore.

One of the accomplishments of this first tour was the selection of three promising new Karen disciples—Saw Taunah, Saw Panlah, and Saw Chet Thaing—who, with their families, were to go down to Moulmein to enter the school for adults where they could learn to read and write Karen, for leadership was especially important as Judson himself knew no Karen, and as yet there was no "Ko Tha Byu" to spearhead the evangelistic effort in this northern area.

**Second Jungle Tour.** The second jungle journey began in January 1832 when the party again went east along the Gyaing and then north on the Dagaing. By this time there were twenty-seven disciples scattered through the villages.

Because the opposition was intense, a number of the families decided to join together in forming a new settlement called Newville, or New Wadesville, on the west bank of the river just below the mouth of the Pankarong Creek. For several years this was to be the main Baptist centre on the upper reaches of the Dayaing River.

The Hlaingbwe Creek joins the Dayaing from the north-west, forming a water route part way to the Salween on the west. For several days the group worked its way up this creek as far as Kwanbi, cutting through fallen trees and other obstructions. From there they sent their boat all the way back to Moulmein where it could enter the Salween and go up that river to meet them not far from the present Kappali, for they had decided to go cross country from Kwanbi to the Salween.

One of their first stops was at Teepah's village in which there were already nine Christians. There they found that a Christian named Looboo had made an offering to the *nats* or evil spirits when his child had been ill. The matter was explained clearly to the man and his wife who came to see that they had done wrong in worshipping the *nats* rather than the Eternal God. The Christian group also explained to the woman, who was decorated with many strings of beads and other ornaments, that a follower of Christ preferably should not deck herself with objects which were purely ornamental. Quite willingly she took off these objects and determined to follow the "plain-dress" system.

The Christian team spent the Lord's day in this village, preaching and talking with the people. Teepah's father, a venerable old man, came forward and gave a good testimony. Teepah's mother and her younger daughter-in-law joined the party of applicants for baptism. But Teepah, himself, could not decide at once on an entire abstinence from rum, though he had never been a drunkard. Eight of the people were baptized. On the next day the gospel team took up its journey once again and soon came in sight of the Salween, the boundary between British and Burmese territories.



It is a mistake to suppose that the travelling Christian group was always kindly received and hospitably treated, for such was not the case. The villagers were often suspicious and fearful if not openly hostile to the visitors. When they arrived at Poo-ah's village near the foot of Kawlon Island, they found that not a single house had a roof as it was the season for re-thatching. As no one welcomed them, the visitors sat around on the ground. Presently the preaching of one of the Karen disciples so influenced one of the village men, a Burman with a Karen wife, that he invited Judson to sit on the floor of his house. Soon a mat was spread overhead, which, with Judson's umbrella, made quite a decent shelter from the hot sun. At some other villages even less hospitality was offered and the group had to move on.

Next day, January 18th, the boat arrived from Newville via Moulmein and the group started up river. Three days of travel took them past the large Kawlon Island, the mouth of the Yunzalin River, to the beginning of the Salween rapids which was the limit of navigable waters. There they met Nai Myat Kyaw and Saw Chet Thaing who had come overland from Kwanbi.

At the landing place called Tounng Pyouk, where the trading boats were obliged to stop on account of the rapids in the river, the group found nothing but rocks and sand-hills, with only two boats and no village near. The team decided to take a trip back from the river, but the trail was so bad, being almost perpendicular in spots and confined to knee-deep water filled with sharp and slippery stones in others, that Judson's bare feet grew raw and he had reluctantly to turn back.

From boat to boat and from village to village they went, preaching wherever people would listen, baptizing where they found faith, and calling individuals to the Moulmein school where they found the potentiality for leadership. Down the west branch past Kawlon Island they went till they came to Tiyaban's village. The chief being away at the time, the people did not "dare to think in his absence." At Yaithahkau's village



an old Buddhist Karen told them that when the English government enforced their religion at the point of the sword, he would begin to consider but not before. However, after some conversation he did urge them to come to his village where he listened with uncommon interest, even asking them to conduct worship and pray before they left.

The rapid pace and short stops of their missionary journey had the disadvantage that the visitors were never very long in any one place. And in the matter of changing religion, it was no light matter for people to make up their minds within a few hours or a few days. As the old man in Yaithakau's village said, "How can I know at once what is right and what is wrong?"

From the very nature of the touring ministry, less time was allowed for training and teaching before people were baptized than had been the case in the Rangoon and Moulmein zayats where inquirers could return day after day and week after week. It was sometimes difficult for the Christian teachers to judge whether the new disciple had changed his actions and motives for actions. As Judson wrote in 1833, *Judson visits Karen villages north of Moulmein.*



"great care ought to be taken in receiving the first Karen converts in any place. The best outward test is to have refrained from rum, nat-worship, etc. and to have kept the Lord's day, and all this for a few months, *on the testimony of their Christian neighbours*. And perhaps it is best to make them ask for baptism several times. The first time asking they may not know their minds." Judson felt that Boardman had proceeded more slowly and carefully, and laid a safer foundation for Christian belief, with the result that there would be fewer suspensions on the Tavoy field, with less trouble to his successors. As visits were repeated at the same villages on successive trips, a longer period of testing could be provided, but sometimes people were baptized within a relatively few hours from the time of their first hearing the gospel preached.

Rounding the southern tip of Kawlon Island on February 2nd, they stopped at Poo-ah's village and then went inland a mile to Poo-door's village where the headman from a small village near Teepah's offered the Christian group the site for a zayat and village at the mouth of the Chummerah Creek where it entered the Salween three miles further up the east channel, and about fifty miles above Moulmein. He also offered to help build the zayat and to settle some of his people there. (1853b Wayland 20).

The group visited the spot and decided that it was a good place to start a Christian centre on the Salween similar to that at Newville on the Dagaing. Saw Taunah was selected to be in charge and sent off to bring his family. After this decision, the team turned its boat downstream once again, later stopping at a Pa-o village where a race of people lived from which no convert had yet been won. Their language seemed entirely different from the Karen and the people were strict Buddhists. They rejected the approaches of the Christian group and would not even allow them to sleep in their houses. It was not till six years later, in July 1838, that Judson baptized the first Pa-o.

Again the group pushed off with frequent stops on both



banks; they passed the site of Pa-an which in 1963 is the capital of the Karen State, and came to Rajah's village for a second time. Rajah listened with great eagerness till past midnight. Next day he was baptized, the first chief in that area to accept Christ. A year and a half later he was to become a full-time mission assistant. (1853b Wayland 57).

Again down river, stopping at a number of Mon villages where people seemed quite set against the gospel; then to another Pa-o village where one man listened attentively. And so back to Moulmein on February 11, 1832, after an absence of six weeks during which Judson had baptized twenty-five and registered about an equal number of hopeful inquirers.

**Third Jungle Trip.** Staying in Moulmein less than three weeks to care for the most urgent matters that had accumulated in his absence, to welcome the Joneses back from Rangoon, and to see Mr. Kincaid off to take their place there, Judson started on his third missionary journey with Nai Myat Kyaw and three other Mon disciples, together with two Karen assistants, Saw Panlah and Saw Chet Thaing. The other Karen assistant, Saw Taunah, they expected to meet in Chummerah with his family.

On their upward trip they by-passed all the Mon villages, touching first at the village below Rajah's where they found that a young Karen prophet named Arecmaday, had a strong following. They were later to visit him at his home on the Yunzalin River and win him and his followers to the Christian cause.

At Rajah's village the chief's wife and eldest daughter declared themselves on the side of Christ. After the baptism, the younger children were brought that Judson might lay his hands on them and bless them. The elder children came of their own accord and held up their folded hands in an act of homage to their parents' God, while Judson offered a prayer that they might obtain grace to become true disciples, and receive the ordinance of baptism. Leaving this interesting family, the group proceeded upriver, stopping wherever they could catch a listening ear.

At Chummerah they found all going well, and baptized five more from Teepah's village where the truth was spreading. They continued upriver "as far as the great log", with evening meet-



ings on sandbars and trips to inland villages. They linked boats in midstream and preached to the occupants of the other boat at their request, the chief of the party "crossing over" and accepting Christ. Judson could not help feeling that the Great Invisible was truly at work in the Karen wilds.

On the way down stream they stopped at Chummerah over Sunday and administered the Lord's Supper to thirty-six communicants, chiefly from villages on the Salween. After a quick cross-country visit to Newville, they hurried back towards Moulmein, taking with them three young men for the school. They reached home on March 27th after a month's absence during which nineteen more had been baptized, making a total of eighty Karen Christians connected with the Moulmein station.

**Proof-reading Keeps Judson in Moulmein.** Judson found that Mr. Bennett had arrived in Moulmein two weeks before from Calcutta with a complete font of types, making it possible for the printing of the New Testament to proceed. This meant that Judson must stay in Moulmein to read the proofs. It looked as if his touring would be delayed for months and perhaps forever. Much as he valued the district work, the printing of the New Testament must take precedence: he corrected the first proof-sheet of the Burmese New Testament just three days later.

On April 1, 1832, the Wades touched in Moulmein on their way from Mergui to Rangoon where they were being transferred. They took Saw Chet Thaing along with them as an assistant in the Karen work which was already well started in the region around Rangoon. Pastor U Ing had been left in charge of Mergui, his nativeplace, aided by Nai Mehm Boke and his wife from Moulmein. U Ing, who had been the second Burmese convert and one of the most faithful and beloved of all the assistants, was to die in Mergui two and a half years later. (1853b Wayland 72).

**Visit to a Karen "Prophet".** While Judson was tied to the proof-reading work, he sent Nai Myat Kyaw in the Mission boat to the Yunzalin River to visit the young Karen prophet, Areemaday, picking up the three Karen assistants at Chummerah

on the way up river. The group was well received by the prophet, an extraordinary young man of twenty, who, while pretending to hold communication with the invisible world, wanted also to find the true God and become acquainted with this true religion. The visiting Christians remained with him three days during which time they were surrounded by a crowd of his followers and were obliged to preach day and night. One young man returned with them to enter Maung Tsan Lone's school in Moulmein which then numbered about twenty students.

In June Mr. Wade became very sick in Rangoon and had to return to Moulmein for medical aid, where Judson persuaded him to remain in charge of the local Moulmein work so that he could concentrate on proof-reading the New Testament and completing the translation of the Old, only one-third of which had been finished. He figured that if he confined himself exclusively to the work, translating twenty-five to thirty verses a day, he could finish the whole Old Testament in two years. Considering the uncertainty of life, together with the pressure which was being put on him by the Mission Board, he decided that this duty took priority over evangelistic work in Moulmein and jungle touring. This work was now well started and with capable Mon and Karen assistants to carry on.

**Completion of N. T. Frees Judson for Fourth Tour.** By December 19, 1832, the printing of the New Testament had been completed, so Judson felt that he could take a break in the translation of the Old Testament by making a fourth tour to the Karen jungles. This time, however, he planned to go and settle in Chummerah for four months. The assistants would tour out from that centre while he could continue with his translation work between visitors at the zayat.

One further innovation was planned—the opening in Chummerah of an adult school for assistants. To this end Judson wrote to Mr. Mason in Tavoy asking him to send up his two best Karen leaders for two months training, at the end of which time they would return to Tavoy able to read and write Karen. To this request, Mr. Mason sent Saw Kaulapau and Saw Quala with whom we are already acquainted as the second Karen convert



(page 69). As yet only Saw Chet Thaing and Saw Panlah knew how to read and write Karen accurately enough to act as teachers.

Saw Quala and Saw Kaulapau had arrived and were working hard in this school of sixteen students, eight of whom had applied for baptism. Between bouts of malaria fever, visitors at the zayat, and preaching every evening and on Lord's days, Judson progressed with the Old Testament translation but was still nine months from finishing when the party returned to Moulmein just before the rains broke.

**First Single Woman Missionary.** This time when Judson left Chummerah, however, there was still a missionary in residence, for a Miss Sarah Cummings had recently arrived from America and had selected Chummerah as her station with the intention of devoting herself to the Karen people. It is worth recording that Miss Cummings was the first single woman ever to come to Burma for Mission work. Her courage in selecting a remote and malarious place like Chummerah, at the beginning of the rainy season, cannot be measured. Saw Taunah, Saw Panlah, and Nai Myat Kyaw also stayed to instruct the new missionary, conduct worship in the zayat, receive inquirers, teach the school, and prepare elementary books in the Karen language. Ko En and Maung Zu Thee also joined the team in Chummerah, and the number of Karens baptized in the church north of Moulmein soon rose to ninety-nine.

**Burmese Bible Translation Completed.** Judson completed the translation of the Burmese Bible on January 31, 1834. He recorded, "Thanks be to God for I can now say that I have attained. I have knelt down before him, with the last leaf in my hand, and implored his forgiveness for all the sins which have polluted my labours in this department, and his aid in future efforts to remove errors and imperfections which necessarily claved to the work. I have commended it to his mercy and grace; I have dedicated it to his glory. May he make his own inspired word, now complete in the Burman tongue, the grand instrument of filling all Burmah with songs of praise to our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen." (1853b Wayland 60).

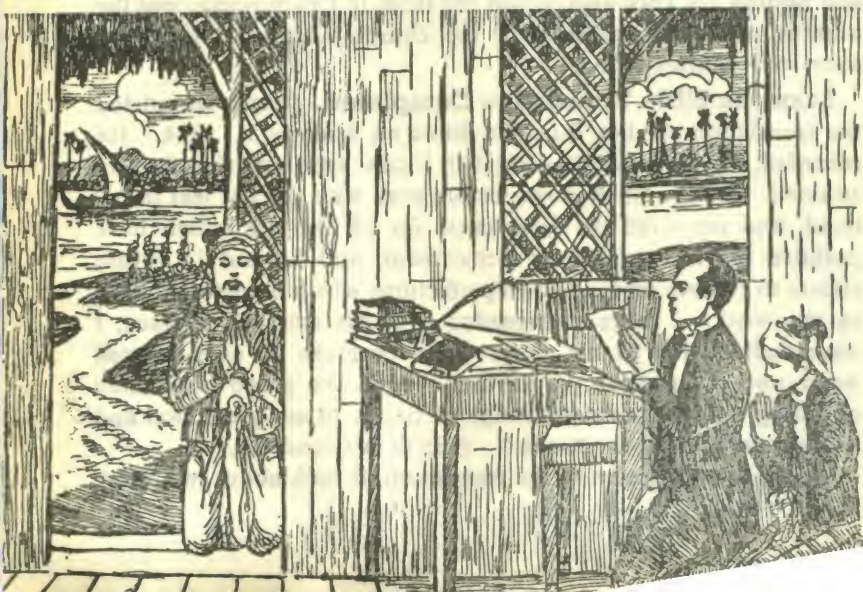
After the completion of the translation, it took about two more



years to finish printing the whole Burmese Bible, the first copy coming from the press on December 29, 1835. This formed the high point in Judson's life, for he had now attained the two great objectives of his missionary career—the translation of the Bible into a new language, and the raising up of a church of a hundred members. Of course, by this time, there were several hundred Burmans, Karens, and Mons who had been baptized in the different stations, but now, also, the Mon-Burmese church in Moulmein of which Judson was the pastor, had ninety-nine members with another soon to be received.

It is interesting that Judson had combined the translation of two-thirds of the Old Testament into Burmese with his strenuous missionary journeys to the Karen jungle. Before closing this chapter it is fitting to record another event by which the Burmese and Karen mission work were brought into closer harmony.

**Judson Marries Widow of Mr. Boardman.** With the big task of Bible translation completed, Judson felt almost lost. What new objectives should he now set for himself? One of these he had had in mind for some time, and he now took passage down the coast to Tavoy to see about it, arriving there on *Judson dedicates the completed Burmese Bible, 1834.*



April 6, 1834. He recorded, "Am delighted with this station and everything about it." The person who was largely responsible for the growth of the Christian church in Tavoy, Sarah Hall Boardman, the widow of Rev. George Dana Boardman, delighted him especially. They were married by Dr. Francis Mason on the tenth and sailed for Moulmein. As they remembered Mr. Boardman and Ann Judson, they wrote, "At last may we all four be reunited before the throne of glory, and form a peculiarly happy family, our mutual loves all purified and consummated in the bright world of love."

Back in Moulmein the Judsons continued in charge of both Burmese and Karen mission work with centres in Chummerah and Newville until 1835 when the responsibility for the Karen work was transferred to the newly arrived Justus H. Vinton and his wife, Calista.



### 13 Expansion: Burma Closes and Opens Again

1832 - 1852

**A**T the close of the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826 it seemed improbable that active church expansion could continue in the Burmese-ruled part of Burma. The Christian centres in Amherst, Moulmein, Tavoy, Mergui, and Chummerah were all in the eastern British-controlled Tenasserim Province.

**Three Churches in Rangoon.** After Pastor U Tha Aye returned to Rangoon in 1827 (page 78 ff), it was found that this cosmopolitan port city continued open to Christian teaching, with the result that the Wades, Mr. Judson, U Ing, Ko En, Maung Dway, Maung Tsan Lone, Maung Shwe Tu, the John T. Jones family, and Eugenio Kincaid all took their turns at helping Pastor U Tha Aye in Rangoon and surrounding areas.

When Mr. Wade arrived in Rangoon for a second time in April 1832, he specialized in Karen work, having brought with him from Moulmein Saw Chet Thaing. A year later the veteran Ko Tha Byu with his wife came up from Tavoy to preach in the Karen villages in the Irrawaddy delta. As this work for the Karens grew, Saw Panlah and three younger assistants joined them from the Chummerah area.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wade was having repeated attacks of sickness which forced his return to the United States in November 1832, accompanied by his wife and by Saw Chet Thaing and Ko Shwe Maung. Judson sent reinforcements. This appeal, strengthened by the personal presentation of the Wades and the two Burmans, aroused a new wave of interest in missions.

After the departure of the Wades, the Rangoon mission



schools had to close due to government pressure, but Karens from the districts continued to come in large numbers to the mission house. Pastor U Tha Aye baptized the first five Karens in the Rangoon area on November 10, 1833, and in consequence was thrown into prison. The following year nearly every Christian in Rangoon was fined by the government.

In spite of these repressive measures, the church continued to grow, with an English, a Burmese, and a Karen church functioning in Rangoon at the beginning of 1835. In 1836 the church members were widely scattered because of continuing persecution. Ko Tha Byu moved to Hmawbi twenty-some miles to the north of Rangoon. (1853b Wayland) 43).

**New Missionary Families Introduce Problems.** New missionary recruits began to arrive in numbers in Moulmein in early 1833. During the first twenty years of mission work only eleven families had been sent to Burma, but during the years 1833 to 1836 this number more than doubled with the arrival of thirteen new families and two single women. This influx was a blessing to the under-staffed mission, but at the same time it introduced very real problems of orientation and placement since there was no administrative authority closer than the Mission Board 12,000 miles away, a distance which required a year for an exchange of letters.

One of the problems faced by the more senior members of the mission was the reluctance of the new families to leave the Moulmein nest before they felt secure in their use of Burmese. At one time Judson had felt that the Mission Board in America should permit the missionaries already in Burma to assign the new families to specific places of work as circumstances permitted. Now that the old hands were outnumbered by the new arrivals, Judson was glad to leave the designations to the home office in spite of the time required for an exchange of letters.

Judson had always opposed a concentration of mission personnel in any one place. Now that seven or eight families were in Moulmein, with more arriving, he was doubly anxious that they be distributed as widely as possible, with one or two families at each central place to collect a church and an interest

group, to help the national leaders.

The scattering of mission personnel began when the John T. Jones family was shifted from Moulmein to Bangkok, Siam, to begin mission work in that country. Rev. and Mrs. Nathan Brown were sent to Sadiya, Assam, to begin work with the Shans. Mr. Jones wrote back from Bangkok saying, "I want to see a chain of missions proceeding from Rangoon by Bassein, Cape Negrais, Kyouk Phyou, Chittagong, Kathay, Assam, through the Shan country into China." (1853b Wayland 80). Judson heartily agreed with the sentiments expressed in this letter. He recommended to the Mission Board that one of the Burma mission printers be transferred to Bangkok to help the Jones family.

Mergui, down the coast below Tavoy, was also promising, and Judson hoped that one of the new families would "take possession of Mergui and do there what Boardman did at Tavoy." That station had just been left vacant by the death of the faithful and much loved Pastor U Ing.

It was felt that two families should be sent to Arakan on the west coast because that British-controlled area seemed to be ready and waiting for them to come, and because the Asho Chin people in the adjoining mountains bore the same relation to Arakan that the Karens bore to Burma. If personnel permitted, Bassein, too, ought to be made a centre, though work in all Burmese-controlled sections of Burma was becoming more difficult.

**Kincaid and Cutter Settle in the Capital.** A development of considerable significance in the expansion of mission work took place in the hot season of 1833 when Mr. Kincaid went up to Ava to begin work again in the capital. No missionary had lived there since the death of Dr. Price in 1828. Because the king was eager to have a printer in Ava, Mr. Kincaid arranged for a mission printer, Mr. Oliver T. Cutter, to come up to join him for two years with a press and Burmese type. Thus it was that within seven years of the end of the Anglo-Burmese War, American missionaries were again permitted to live and work in the capital at the heart of the empire. By the end of the year, two baptisms were reported, the first, Ma Nwa U, wife of an old Rangoon disciple, and the second, a respectable resident of Ava.



Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Simons joined Mr. Kincaid in 1835 after two years of Burmese study in Moulmein. By March of that year the Ava church had twelve members. The missionaries visited from house to house accompanied by Ko Shwe Ni, the Burmese assistant. Their evangelistic work extended into the country round the capital and to neighbouring towns. Soon visitors began to flock to the mission house in large numbers. (1865 Anonymous 152-3).

As was usual in those days, the missionary wife started a school in which twenty-nine young people were taught. Two of them joined the church whose members had increased to twenty-one by 1836.

Mr. Kincaid undertook a most dangerous trip in 1837 from Ava via Mogaung and the Hukaung Valley to visit the Browns who had gone to work in Sadiya, Assam. He got as far as the Mogaung jade mines but was robbed repeatedly, taken prisoner, scarcely escaping with his life. He was forced to turn back, reaching Ava after thirteen days of hard travel in a destitute condition.

**New King Less Friendly to Christian Church.** In 1837 Prince Tharrawaddy staged a coup d'etat and deposed his brother, King Bagyidaw. Under the new king the mission had to close. Ko Shwe Ni remained in charge of the church which continued faithful in spite of persecution. It was not until twenty years later, after the second war with the British, that Mr. Kincaid and Dr. Dawson again settled in the capital.

Mission work in Rangoon was permitted to continue for another year after Tharrawaddy became king. Mr. and Mrs. Lovell Ingalls arrived in Rangoon in October 1837 where they and the Simons concentrated on Burmese work. A copy of the tract called the *Golden Balance* and the *Catechism* were given to every Rangoon family during 1836-37, and hundreds of people visited the mission daily to hear the preaching.

Mr. and Mrs. Elisha Abbott gave their time to the Karens, travelling often to Hmawbi and Pantanaw. From November 1837 to September 1838 Mr. Abbott baptized 117 persons,



one of them a woman in Pantanaw aged 120 years. In August, four Karens were imprisoned for becoming Christians. In addition to his evangelistic work, Mr. Abbott conducted a school for pastors with 25 students. In November of 1838 the missionaries had to leave Rangoon when Tharrawaddy's restrictive policy came into force there. Burma proper was now closed to all missionary effort, and the churches had to be left in charge of their national pastors.

When Messrs. Kincaid and Abbott were able to pay a visit to Rangoon a year later, they found only fourteen remaining in the Burmese church, but the Karen churches had a membership of 387 with several hundred awaiting baptism. Because the restrictions were still in force, these two families were posted to Arakan which had been under British control since 1826. There they joined the other missionaries who had been sent there a few years earlier.

**Baptist Efforts in British-held Arakan.** Arakan is Burma's western coastal area, separated from the rest of the country by a broken mountainous band which is still covered in the Twentieth Century with dense forest in which tigers and elephants are numerous. On the north, this area meets Chittagong which is now a part of East Pakistan. From Akyab in the north, down the island-studded coast with its mangrove tidal swamps filling much of the space between the mainland and the islands, to the open sandy beaches of Sandoway and Ngapali, to Diamond Island where the giant sea turtles lay their eggs--this is the western area to which Mr. and Mrs. Comstock had been sent at the beginning of the hot season of 1835.

They were neither the first missionaries nor the first American Baptists to try to establish mission work in Arakan. Back in 1820 after King Bagyidaw had refused to grant religious toleration to his subjects, Mr. and Mrs. Colman had been sent to Chittagong to prepare a refuge for the Judsons and the Burmese Christians if they found it impossible to remain in Rangoon. (See page 28). They had settled in a village where the 200 inches of rainfall, malarial

mosquitoes, and tuberculosis killed the faithful Colman within two years. Following his death, Mr. Fink of the Serampore Mission had worked in Akyab, but he was having to give up most of his Christian efforts.

The new missionaries decided to settle in Kyaukpyu (White Rock) at the northern tip of Ramree Island. This was a town of about two thousand people which had been chosen by the British as their military centre for Arakan. The Comstocks stayed with Mr. Adams, who was in charge of the port, until they were able to get a thatched house of their own. Then tract-distribution and preaching began. With the beginning of the rains in May, Mr. Comstock was hindered from travelling, but people flocked to Kyaukpyu and carried away some 25,000 tracts. Following the usual mission pattern, Mrs. Comstock started a school with instruction in both Burmese and English.

**The Asho Chin People.** The missionaries survived the rains and, with the coming of the dry cool season, started trips to An (Aeng) District on the mainland, distributing more tracts and preaching in the scattered villages. There they met the Asho Chins (Kyens) living in the mountainous sections who, unlike the Karens, did not readily accept the Christian teaching.

During the year before the Comstocks went to Arakan, Francis Mason had baptized a Chin woman in Tavoy who was probably the first of her language group to become a Christian, but since she was far separated from her fellow Asho Chins, her acceptance of Christ did not lead to the winning of others. In 1852 another old Chin woman living among the Kemees was baptized by Mr. Knapp. In 1855 a missionary in Prome baptized a third Chin. Each of these Chins, baptized in widely separated places, has been variously claimed as the first Asho Chin Christian. Although the Ashos were slow to accept Christ when first hearing the gospel, yet in the middle of the Twentieth Century they make up the bulk of the church on the Arakan coast. In 1835 and following years, missionary efforts were concentrated more on the Burmese,

Arakanese, and the Kemees, another mountain people living northeast of Akyab.

**Race with Sickness and Death.** In March 1836 the Mission tried to reinforce its Arakan personnel by sending Mr. and Mrs. Ingalls from Moulmein, but storms forced their schooner to turn back. A year later a new family, Levi and Catharine Hall, arrived but had scarcely begun the study of Burmese before both died of malaria. The Comstocks carried on with the help of Maung Ket, a young Burmese preacher sent by Dr. Judson from Moulmein, and an Arakanese fifty years of age named Saya Koung Oung. The missionaries and these national leaders together formed the first Baptist church in Kyaukpyu on May 21, 1837. But within six months the Comstocks were sickening and had to leave for Moulmein for medical treatment. Mr. Fink, too, gave up his work in Akyab, leaving a church of thirty or forty members in charge of good assistants.

With health recovered, the Comstocks returned in February 1839, bringing with them a Mr. Stilson. This time they decided to settle in Ramree town which had a population of 10,000, located on the east coast of the island at the edge of the mangrove swamp, hoping that it would have a healthier climate than Kyaukpyu and with a larger population within easy reach. By May they had formed a church with eleven members, and Mrs. Comstock had opened a school with fifteen pupils. They made evangelistic trips to the various parts of nearby Cheduba Island.

In 1840 the Comstocks and Stilsons were joined by Messrs. Kincaid and Abbott (see page 104) who could no longer work in Rangoon. Mr. Kincaid had carried on work in Ava from 1833 to 1837, and now for two and a half years was to help develop the church in Arakan. On his arrival in Akyab on April 22, he found a church of thirteen members all but one of whom had been baptized many years before. He took charge of this church since it had been made over by the English Baptists to the American Baptist Mission.

Mr. Comstock baptized three new converts in May, one



an aged Burman ninety years old who had been sent to Arakan from Ava to instruct the population in the Buddhist scriptures. The little church had increased to thirty members by the end of August.

In 1841 there were two assistants on Cheduba Island in addition to the three mission families in North Arakan. A new church was established at Cruda near Akyab, and four Christian schools were operating, one in Akyab under Mrs. Kincaid, two in Ramree under Mrs. Comstock and Mrs. Stilson, and the fourth in Kyaukpyu under a local Christian teacher. All seemed to be going well when the dreaded cholera broke out, killing one-third of the British residents and thousands of the local inhabitants.

**The Kemees People Ask for Teachers.** In spite of this epidemic, Christian work moved on. Early in May, Chetza, chief of the Kemees who lived on the Kaladan River 150 miles north of Akyab, and thirteen subordinate chiefs, sent a letter to Mr. Kincaid saying that they were anxious to know about God and be taught in the true Book, and giving the names of 273 children whom they wished to place in school. Mr. Kincaid visited this chief but was unable to take full advantage of the opening for Christian teaching which had been presented. The work in Akyab itself was interrupted in the autumn of 1842 when the Kincaids' health failed and they had to return to America. There they appealed strongly for six new families for Arakan.

Mr. and Mrs. Stilson transferred from Ramree to Akyab to take over the Kincaids' work. While on various visits to the Kemees country, Mr. Stilson compiled a vocabulary of one-third of the Kemees words, using the Karen alphabet. He also reduced to writing the language of the Asho Chins who lived south of the Kemees. Mr. Knapp later prepared a Kemees catechism.

The year 1843 again brought the cholera and this time Mrs. Comstock succumbed. Many towns and villages were nearly depopulated. Mr. Comstock died of the same disease two years later at the age of thirty-five. In 1846 Mr. Stilson

returned to Moulmein, his place being filled temporarily by Mr. and Mrs. Ingalls. In 1847 five Kemees were baptized, the first fruits of their language-group; five more were added in 1849.

**Death Defeats Mission Efforts in North Arakan.** In the years 1849 — 1856 more mission families were sent to Arakan in an attempt to replace the losses. Among the newcomers were Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Moore, the wife living only eight months; Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Campbell, he surviving only two years; Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Knapp, she living only one year and he three; Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Rose, she dying of cholera after only six months. By 1854 the mission was left vacant for more than a year during which time Mr. Ingalls supervised the work from Rangoon.

The last missionaries assigned to North Arakan were Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Satterlee; he died from cholera after nine months and his wife five months later.

So ended the effort to establish a Baptist mission in North Arakan. Though churches and schools had been established at Akyab, Cruda, Kyaukpyu, and Ramree, and though a beginning had been made of a church and Christian literature for the Kemees, and one Asho Chin had been baptized, yet in the end, the two hundred inches of rain, the cholera, the malaria, and the mangroove swamps defeated the effort and made it unwise to continue sending in foreign missionary personnel. Seventeen missionaries had died within a period of twenty-one years. The story of the North Arakan church is one of heroic failure.

**Work in South Arakan.** But the account is very different further down the coast. From Sandoway to Cape Negrais and Diamond Island the coast is relatively clean and sandy with fewer mangrove swamps. Health conditions were just enough better to tip the scales to success rather than failure.

Mr. and Mrs. Elisha Abbott began work in Sandoway in 1840. Their work developed quite differently from that further north, for the emphasis was almost entirely on helping the Karen refugees who had fled across the mountains from



Bassein District, and on training Karen pastors and evangelists. The great success of the Sandoway mission was not with the local Arakanese, Burmese, and Asho Chins but with the displaced population from Burma. Its importance lay in the preparation for the blossoming of the Karen churches in the delta of the Irrawaddy River at the close of the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852 when all the delta south of Prome and Toungoo came under British administration. When that time came, Sandoway lost its importance as a Karen mission station.

Although the primary effort in Sandoway was for the Karens, Mrs. Abbott was unwearied in her efforts to reach the Burmese residents. The first Burman to become a Christian in 1843 came as a result of her efforts. Sitting on the verandah of her house with a bundle of tracts and scriptures, she would read and explain to all who cared to listen. Occasionally a large group would sit in silence for hours. From the new converts who were added, two were employed in preaching and tract distribution.

Considerable attention was given to Burmese work by Mr. Abbott also, when in 1850 he preached in Burmese on Sunday and occasionally on weekday evenings. Mr. Van Meter studied Burmese as well as Pwo Karen in order to be able to help with the Burmese preaching. By 1851 there was a small Burmese church of six or seven members and two preaching assistants. Mrs. Abbott's premature death in 1845 removed the main leader in this work.

**Karen Refugees in Coastal Villages.** The bulk of the work carried on in the Sandoway Mission was for the Karen refugees who settled in the coastal villages--from Sandoway on the north down through Gwa, Satthwa, Magyizin, Bawmi, Onchaung, Chaungtha, Sinma, Buffalo (Ngayokkaung?), Great Plains, Phaungdo, and Thay Rau. Between 1840 and 1848 five thousand five hundred people were reported baptized, and an almost equal number were living faithful Christian lives but had not yet been baptized. This number included Pwo and Sgaw Karens living both in Arakan and Burma proper.



Even so, the number was several times larger than that for all the years and all the races of Burma up to 1840. (1865 Anonymous 181).

With such an increase in church membership in such a short time, the need for trained pastors and preachers became urgent. To meet this need, Mr. Abbott, helped by Mr. and Mrs. Beecher and Mr. and Mrs. Van Meter, started two schools to train such workers, one at Sandoway and another later at Onchaung further down the coast. These were similar to the school which Mr. Abbott had conducted in Rangoon in 1837 and 1838.

**Death of Ko Tha Byu.** Ko Tha Byu and his wife had come to Sandoway along with the Abbotts. He was no longer a young man, and his strenuous life in Tavoy and the Irrawaddy delta was telling on him. He suffered from rheumatism and walked with difficulty. After reaching Arakan, he settled down in a little village near Sandoway where he helped win more Karens to Christ, just as he had done in other places. When finally he caught a violent cold and pneumonia set in, he approached death without fear. Mr. Abbott recorded of him: "No mound marks his grave, no storied urn his resting place; but the eternal mountains are his monument, and the Christian villages that clothe their sides his epitaph." He died in Sandoway September 9, 1840. (1945a St. John 89).

**Problems of Karen Churches.** Three features of particular interest engaged the attention of the missionaries and the pastors of the rapidly growing Karen Christian group: (1851 Annual Report 9, 10).

1. *The organization of associations of churches with their annual meetings.* These were designed not to exercise ecclesiastical authority but to diffuse Christian sympathies and knowledge, to concentrate benevolent action and bring together results of diversified experience of all the members, so that each might derive wisdom and encouragement from what had been gained by others.

2. *The effort to settle the Karens, both refugees and others, in permanent villages* of a sufficient size to make possible the support of schools, churches, and daily industry. This appeared to be necessary to the highest success of the gospel among them, for Karen custom had been to live in very small villages which could be easily shifted as the jungle was cut for new mountain fields. Such small impermanent settlements did not permit social, economic, or religious co-operation.

The villages of Great Plains and Thay Rau were fine examples of new settlements on a self-sufficient scale. Pastor Thra Wah Dee had led in the development of the Great Plains village with its houses in rows and built with care, the ground under and around free from rubbish, the little garden plots well cultivated and fruitful, the thriving nurseries, the street straight and wide and neatly bordered with fruit trees and flowers—all planned and directed by Wah Dee.

In Thay Rau the moving spirit was Pastor Thra Tway Po. Under his leadership the village had been hacked from the jungle; rice fields now appeared where wild elephants had roamed only four years before. The residents were inspired to take initiative, and they were soon taking pride in their progressive and cooperative accomplishments. (1852 Annual Report 64-65).

3. The third feature which engaged the attention of the missionaries and pastors was *the development of self-support* for church and school, and the sending of evangelists to other groups than their own. In many of the new villages the group built its own church and supported its own pastor out of the meager resources at its disposal. A Karen Home Mission Society was also formed among them to make it co-operatively possible to send home missionaries to other regions. Three such evangelists had already been appointed.

Mr. Abbott reported, "As a whole, they are maintaining the institutions of the Gospel and the order of the Lord's house according to the pattern shown in the word of God. Their influence is good upon the whole multitude about

them; not so much, perhaps, by the proclamation of the Christian doctrines as by the exhibition of the Christian life. An impression is being made which promises glorious things for Burmah. Not a few Burmans are already attracted to the truth by that blessed influence. May we not hope that the Karen churches may become the consecrated instrumentality of the conversion of Burmah to God?"

Such was the development of the Sandoway Karen Mission when in 1852 the British and the Burmese fought their second war. During the upset days when no law and order existed in the rural areas of the delta, looting, plundering, and burning went on unchecked, many Karen villages being completely wiped out. An epidemic of cholera added to the losses.

As soon as the British had re-established order in Bassein, Messrs. Abbott and Van Meter hurried there from Moulmein, arriving on July 12, 1852. The Sandoway Karen Mission had served its purpose; now Burma was again open and Bassein was to become the centre for Karen work rather than Sandoway.



## 14 Christian Schools and Publications

1833 - 1845

**D**URING the years 1835 to 1852, schools multiplied and developed. As we have already seen, the missionary wives had felt from the very beginning that a part of their responsibility was the teaching of schools, a feeling that was shared by such Burmese Christian women as Ma Min Lay. We recall, also, that the schools run by Mrs. Boardman in Tavoy were considered by the British as models for the government to follow in its educational system. (See page 74).

**Types of Schools.** Early Christian schools were of several different types, not always clearly distinguished from each other. Day schools and boarding schools were two basic types meant for all who wished a general education. In addition, some were specialized as normal and theological schools which catered to adults, though children were sometimes included in the classes of the normal schools. Frequently these specialized schools met only during the rainy season, with the teachers and students touring the villages for their practical work during the dry season.

In Tavoy District Mr. Mason opened as many self-supporting village schools as possible, bringing to the central boarding schools only the most promising pupils to train as village teachers and preachers. In Moulmein more emphasis was put on centralized schools. This practice, Mr. Mason felt, tended to discourage the villagers in self-dependence, for in the central schools many parents expected that all food and clothing would be supplied to their children without charge.

There was also considerable difference of opinion among the missionaries about the wisdom of teaching English. Mr. Mason

was a strong advocate of a vernacular education, believing that more could be taught to children in their own language in four years than could be taught in English in ten. He also felt that the standard of English taught was too low to be of much use, that its study led to pride, a desire to make money rather than to serve, and to contamination from association with the lower fringes of English society. The Boardmans, however, believed in teaching both English and Burmese, a practice which was to become established in later years, though not until after a long period of sharp difference of opinion among the various missionaries and the Mission Board.

Public education in Tenasserim Province began in 1833 when government sanctioned Rs. 500 a month for the education of children. In 1834 officials asked Mr. Bennett of the Mission Press in Moulmein to start a Government English School on Maingay Street. This he did with the approval of his fellow missionaries, being paid the equivalent of his mission salary by the government. He thus became the founder of the first government school in Burma.

Judson was happy to see the Mission given this opportunity to have a Christian influence on the pupils of this school. At times he had been considered a discourager of education, but he did not mean to condemn schools entirely. Certainly in this case Mr. Bennett did a first class educational job as well as caring for the moral and spiritual welfare of his students. The Christian teachers carefully refrained from using class hours for religious instruction and from exerting any pressure, but at the end of two years when a Chinese pupil asked for baptism, it stirred up such a furor in the community that Mr. Bennett resigned as head, much against the wishes of the educational authorities.

**Former Printer Heads Government Schools.** Mr. George Hough, second American Baptist missionary to come to Burma back in 1816. and who had been in government service since about 1827, succeeded Mr. Bennett as head of the Moulmein school. He proved to be a most capable and successful teacher, and by 1845 he was not only headmaster of the Moulmein Government School but also the Inspector of Schools for



all of Tenasserim Province. He devoted much of his time to the preparation of vernacular text books, a task in which many missionaries cooperated. (1947 Langham-Carter 86).

**Mission Schools in Moulmein.** Soon after Mr. Bennett's withdrawal from the Government School, the Mission opened its own Burmese Boys' Boarding School with Mr. Hosea Howard in charge. By 1847 it had an enrolment of ninety students and he could write: "This school is exerting an increasingly wide and powerful religious influence in the Burmese community. During the past week I have been requested to receive sons of two different Burmese officers, and during the year I have received other children as boarders from highly respectable families in the city." The Assistant Commissioner, when inspecting the school, noted that the proportion of Burmese-speaking to non-Burmese-speaking children was twice as great in the mission school as in the government school from which the study of the Bible was excluded.

In addition to this Burmese Boys' Boarding School, there were seven other Baptist schools in Moulmein and Amherst<sup>1</sup>, and district schools were maintained at Chet Thaing's village on the Salween, at Newville on the Dagaing, at Bootah on the Ataran, and at Dohn Yahn on the Gyaing in the Karen area to the north and east of Moulmein where Judson and Vinton had toured and worked.

In Tavoy there were four schools<sup>2</sup> with eleven village schools in the district.

| 1. <i>Name of School</i>      | <i>Superintendent</i>    | <i>Number of pupils</i> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Burmese Day School            | Mrs. T. Ranney           | 20                      |
| Amherst Day School            | Rev. J.M. Haswell        | 56                      |
| Burmese Theological School    | Rev. E.A. Stevens        | 8                       |
| Sgaw Karen Boarding School    | Rev. J. Vinton           | 154                     |
| Pwo Karen Boarding School     | Rev. E.E. Bullard        | 40                      |
| Karen Normal School           | Mrs. J.G. Binney         | 17                      |
| Karen Theological School      | Rev. J.G. Binney         | 36                      |
| 2. English and Burmese School | Rev. C. Bennett          | 30                      |
| Karen Day School              | Rev. Francis Mason       | 12                      |
| Karen Boarding School         | Mrs. Bennett & Mrs. Wade | 25                      |
| Karen Theological School      | Rev. E.B. Cross          | 23                      |



**British Attitude Towards Mission Schools.** An article in the CALCUTTA REVIEW for 1847, pages 139-145, gave high praise to mission efforts in education: "Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the labours of the American Baptist Mission in the education department. Their schools are far superior in every respect to the government schools at Moulmein and Mergui, and are producing among the Karens very remarkable effects... The progress has been wonderful; their pupils have gone forth into the villages, and have imparted to their brethren the seeds of knowledge.

"Not less nobly, because of less remarkable success, labours the Burmese branch of the Mission under the father of the American Burman Mission, the Rev. A. Judson...(but) it is to be regretted that the Mission has been unable, for want of men and funds, to do more in the Peguan branch. Mr. Haswell is the only gentleman who has devoted himself to the study of this language, and to employing it as a medium of communication with the people. The Mission coming originally from Burmah proper, it is not surprising that the Peguan has been somewhat neglected when men were wanting to maintain the ground gained in Burmese." (1945 St. John 150)

The writer in the REVIEW concluded by saying that it was somewhat a reproach to his British countrymen to find that in Tenasserim Province by far the best schools were those maintained by the American Baptist Mission, a body from a nation having no material interest in the country, but none-the-less entirely devoted to the welfare of the people. "What will not the gratitude of future generations be to the names of Judson and his compeers when the truth is preached in future ages from the translation of the Scriptures made, printed, and first taught by these American teachers; and how will it sound when in future times it will be said, and truly said, 'Our English rulers were, indeed, conquerors of the Burmans, and wrung from them these fair and beautiful provinces, but our American teachers were conquerors of ignorance, and dispelled the darkness from which the English never strove to rescue us....The field is now occupied and well occupied;

and the only manner in which the good work should be aided by the English, is by furnishing funds to enable the American Mission to extend its sphere and increase its numbers."

**Liberality of British Christians.** This praise from a Christian member of the ruling race was generous and helpful. It must be recorded that individuals in the British government and army gave most liberally to help mission work, and to support schools and evangelists. Without their personal help, the work would often have had to stand still for lack of funds and backing. Particularly in the years immediately following 1845 when Baptists in America divided into northern and southern groups over the slavery issue, and funds for missions were sharply reduced, the generosity of English residents was especially valuable.

**Theological Training.** The theological training of Burmese and Karen church leaders was considered only second in importance to winning individuals to Christ. During the first twenty years of the Burma Mission, when the only Christians were Burmese, no special effort was made to educate national assistants because they had all been educated according to Burmese custom before their conversion to Christianity. (1853 Anonymous 86 ff).

But almost as soon as missionary efforts became successful among the Karens, particularly after the reduction of their language to writing, the missionaries considered it important to educate individuals of promise in order to qualify them to serve as preachers or school teachers. Unlike the Burmese, the Karens had had no previous education in their own language. Individual missionaries, therefore, taught them during the monsoon months--June to October--when 200 inches of rainfall in Tenasserim and Arakan prevented travel in the jungle.

**First Instruction in Karen.** At Moulmein the first instruction of any kind given by a missionary through the Karen language was by Mr. Vinton in 1835 when there were about 200 Karen Christians in the area. Two of the students were mission assistants who had received some instruction through



the Burmese language. Mr. Vinton aimed to teach the assistants and several others the simple truths of the Bible and show them how to bring these truths to bear upon the hearts of their countrymen.

The plan was blessed of God and converts and churches were multiplied. During his ten years of teaching prospective pastors, Mr. Vinton formed no regular classes and followed no regular syllabus. The students spent the rains in the classrooms of the boarding schools, but as soon as the dry weather came in November, the teacher and his pupils started off on preaching tours where the students learned by example and practice. Theirs was the apprentice system of theological education, with the teacher at one end of the dugout canoe and the students at the other. Mr. Vinton adapted his teaching to the capacities of those he taught and to the local needs as they arose. All the preachers who worked in Moulmein and Rangoon until 1846 were trained in this informal manner. Mr. Bullard and Mr. Moore made some efforts in the same direction among the Pwo Karens of Moulmein District between 1845 and 1853.

At Tavoy Mr. Wade and Mr. Mason taught Karen theological students for three or four years. Subsequently Mr. Mason alone taught the classes until 1846 when Mr. Cross, who had been specially appointed for this work, was ready to take it up. In Tavoy and in a branch school at Mata, some ten to twenty-six students were usually preparing for the ministry.

At Mergui Mr. Brayton began work among the Pwos in 1839. As soon as conversions took place, he began a course for training pastors similar to that of Mr. Vinton in Moulmein.

In Rangoon in 1838 and in Arakan beginning in 1840, Mr. Abbott held courses for young men every rainy season. (See pp. 106, 112). A boarding school for this purpose was maintained at Sandoway with as many as fifty young Karen pastors attending. After several years experience, Mr. Abbott found it better to meet such students nearer their homes for two months during the dry season at such villages as Onchaung.

**Centralized Training.** At the first convention of missionaries in Moulmein in 1836, during the visit of Rev. Malcolm



Howard of the Mission Board, plans were made for a more permanent type of theological school for all races. It was decided to locate such an institution temporarily at Tavoy with Mr. Wade in charge. The course of studies was to be drawn up by the missionaries and based on their first-hand knowledge of the needs of the students. The syllabus was to include a general exposition of the Bible, beginning astronomy, geography, chronology, and an outline of church history. Later some instruction in public health and medicine, English, and arithmetic was added. It was recommended that since many Karens at that time did not understand Burmese, the Karen missionaries might continue separate classes for them.

The new central seminary in Tavoy opened as planned with twenty students—seven Burmans and thirteen Karens—coming from Moulmein, Bassein, and Tavoy. Most of them had already worked for some time as mission assistants. This school continued to function in Tavoy for more than two years until Mr. E.A. Stevens arrived in 1838 to become the permanent teacher. The next year the school was moved to Moulmein after which, according to the recommendations of the convention, the Karen missionaries continued separate classes for the instruction of Karen assistants in their separate stations.

**Primarily a Burmese School.** Mr. Steven's school, therefore, became primarily for Burmese students. The seven who joined in the first class were already employed as assistants in preaching and publications. At the start, this school met only three days a week in the afternoon after the duties of the assistants had been completed. Within four months, however, the enrolment had increased to sixteen members including one Pa-o and two Burmans from Tavoy. The next year the average attendance was seven, including one Pwo Karen who knew Burmese. These seven were full-time students, the assistants joining them four times a week after work.

By August 1841 Mission funds were so short that the school had to be closed till June 1844 when six students of promise again began the regular course of study, with three Pwo Karens as part-time students. This largely Burmese school continued

until the death of Dr. Judson in 1850 when Mr. Stevens had to give up the school to take over many of his responsibilities.

Throughout the nine years of the school's history, its distinctive character was that of a Bible class. It was the constant aim of the teacher not only to unfold the sense of the Scripture, but also to show the pupils practically how to make the Bible its own interpreter. This was important because there were no commentaries to which the students could refer for help. During the last year of the school, the preaching assistants were also given training in preparing and delivering sermons.

Because all existing Burmese and Mon churches contained fewer than 300 members, the number of candidates for the ministry was correspondingly small. Still it was of real importance that the leaders of the young Burmese church get a thorough knowledge of the word of God and learn to use that knowledge to the best effect in preaching the gospel.

**Books for Pastors.** One of the by-products of the school was the preparation of several reference books for the use of the assistants; these included *Comments on Parts of Romans and Galations*, *References for the New Testament*, *Notes on the Geography of Palestine*, a *Concordance of the Burmese Bible*, *Sketches from Church History*, and a *General History Ancient and Modern*. Other books already available in Burmese and used in the Seminary included the *Bible*, the *Life of Christ from the Four Gospels*, a *Digest of Scriptures*, the *Seven Manuals* compiled by Dr. Judson for the use of Burmese pastors, a *Catechism of Scripture History*, *Aids to Church Discipline*, a *Catechism of Astronomy and Geography*, the *Religious Herald Magazine*, and various tracts already referred to.

**Central Theological School for Karens.** The decentralized type of Karen theological training was continued until 1845 when a central Karen Theological School was started in Moulmein under Mr. J. G. Binney. The widely scattered Karen missionaries had begun to feel that converts were coming into the church faster than they were able to assimilate them, and that a larger number of pastors must be trained.

Mr. Binney ran this school from May 1845 until April 1850



when he had to return to America because of his wife's health. During his absence, Mr. Norman Harris took temporary charge of the institution. He was succeeded in 1851 by Mr. Vinton who ran the school for a year until he moved to Rangoon when the school had to be closed for lack of a teacher.

The Karen Theological School met about eight months per year, with an average student body of twenty-eight, and a total of sixty students trained during the seven years of the school's existence. About one-third of this number came from Moulmein, and two-thirds from Rangoon and Bassein.

**Evaluation of the Two Types of Training.** In estimating the results of theological education, it would be difficult to say whether the centralized or the decentralized system was more valuable. Many preachers enjoyed the advantages of both methods of training. In general it may be said that those trained in the informal system made the better touring evangelists, and those in the central school the better preachers and pastors.

Although the Karen Theological School in Moulmein was closed in 1852 when the Second Anglo-Burmese War was being fought, the missionaries favoured re-opening it as soon as conditions would permit. As the same time, they wanted to continue the informal training for those students who, for family or other reasons, could not go to Moulmein. Certain it was that by the middle of the Nineteenth Century a strong conviction had developed of the need and wisdom of centralized and co-operative training centres.

**Presses and Literature.** With the rapid growth of churches and schools, the demand for Christian literature increased accordingly. As will be recalled, the first printing press used in Burma was the gift of the English Baptist Mission at Serampore. This was set up in Rangoon by Mr. Hough, and on it were printed many tracts and Scripture portions in Burmese which Dr. Judson prepared. When the First Anglo-Burmese War began, Mr. Hough took this press back to Calcutta where Judson's first Burmese Dictionary was printed under the supervision of Mr. Wade.

When missionary work began in Moulmein after peace was



restored, a printing press was established there which became the main centre for Christian publications. Mr. Cephas Bennett in 1830 took with him to this printing establishment the first press to be sent from America. This was followed by another in 1832 which came as a gift with Mr. Oliver T. Cutter from the Oliver Street Baptist Church in New York City. Towards the close of the same year two more presses were brought by Mr. Hancock. For about nine months during 1833-34, Mr. Cutter took one of the smaller presses to Ava.

By 1837 the growth of the church had been so rapid among the Karens of Tavoy and Mergui, and the demand for reading matter in those districts had become so great that it was thought advisable to open a second press there. Accordingly Mr. Bennett was sent with a press to Tavoy where it was kept busy for more than fifteen years when it was again merged with the one in Moulmein in 1855. After the Second Anglo-Burmese War, the entire Baptist Mission Press was shifted in 1862 from Moulmein to Rangoon. During the first fifty years of the history of the church in Burma, eight different missionaries were connected with the various Baptist Presses.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cephas Bennett's term of service was a long one, extending through full thirty-four years. He may be remembered as the one whose guiding hand directed the publications programme during the important period of church growth between the first and second wars. It should be recorded, also, that Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, as well as others of the printers, gave generously of their time to other forms of Christian work, particularly to the business side of the Mission and the schools and English-speaking church in Moulmein.

The grand period of printing followed the opening of the press in Moulmein until 1838 when the closure of Burma proper to mission work greatly reduced the opportunity for distributing

|               |           |               |           |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| 1. G.H. Hough | 1816-1827 | S.M. Osgood   | 1834-1846 |
| C. Bennett    | 1830-1864 | L. Stilson    | 1834-1851 |
| O. T. Cutter  | 1832-1835 | J.H. Chandler | 1841-1845 |
| R. B. Hancock | 1832-1838 | T.S. Ranney   | 1843-1855 |

Mr. Cutter and Mr. Chandler were transferred to Bangkok, and Mr. Ranney resigned in 1855 to start a press of his own.

Christian literature, resulting in a considerable build-up of stock on the shelves. The shortage of mission funds during the 1840's also limited the amount of new printing which could be undertaken.

1837 was the year when the presses were kept busiest, turning out 21,002,000 pages of printed matter in three different languages of Burma. The total number of pages printed from 1830 till 1864, when Mr. Bennett retired, was 164,208,137. Distribution reached a peak in 1836 when 10,380,956 pages were issued, this amount being reduced by about 50% each year until 1840. The Moulmein presses stood idle in 1841.

The materials printed included tracts and books of a religious or educational character. Some of these were original works prepared by the missionaries to meet the special needs of the population. Others were translations of useful books from English or other languages. The chief work of translation was, of course, the Christian Scriptures which were published first in parts, then as separate New and Old Testaments, and finally as the whole Bible. This translation work was carried on first in Burmese, then in Mon, Sgaw Karen, and Pwo Karen.<sup>1</sup> (1865 Anonymous 158).

# 1. Highlights of Bible Translation to the mid-century:

## *The Burmese Version by Dr. Judson:*

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Gospel of Matthew printed                   | 1817 |
| Manuscript of the N. T. completed           | 1823 |
| Manuscript of the N. T. revised             | 1829 |
| N. T. printed, 3000 copies                  | 1832 |
| O. T. manuscript completed                  | 1834 |
| Revised N. T. printed 10,000 copies         | 1837 |
| O. T. printed in three volumes, 2000 copies | 1838 |
| Complete Bible printed, 5000 copies         | 1840 |

## *The Mon Version by J. M. Haswell:*

|                                     |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Scripture portions & Life of Christ | 1837 |
| N. T. printed, 2000 copies          | 1847 |

## *The Sgaw Karen Version by Dr. Francis Mason:*

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Sermon on the Mount printed                   | 1837    |
| N. T., four printings totalling 13,000 copies | 1843-61 |
| O. T. printed, 2,000 copies                   | 1853    |

## *Pwo Karen Version by Rev. D. L. Brayton:*

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| First books in Pwo Karen | 1838 |
| N. T. printed            | 1852 |

In addition to these publications were added dictionaries and grammars for the use of missionaries, theological and practical works for pastors and other Christian workers, hymn books for all language groups, a variety of school text books, a Sgaw Karen monthly magazine called *THE MORNING STAR*, begun in Tavoy in 1842, and the *RELIGIOUS HERALD* in Burmese, begun in Moulmein in 1843, whose name was changed in 1862 to *THE BURMAN MESSENGER*.

Certainly the emphasis laid on general education, the training of pastors and Christian workers, and the provision of an adequate literature must have played a large part in helping to establish the church firmly in Lower Burma. The investment of men and money in this field has produced large dividends.



## 15 The End of the Judson Era

1835 - 1852

**W**HILE all the expansion was going on in the Irrawaddy delta and in Arakan, the home base of Missionary work still remained in Moulmein and the Tenasserim coast. There Adoniram Judson and his second wife, Sarah Boardman Judson, were at the centre of activities.

**New System of Evangelism.** With his hands full of literary work, Judson tried a new system of urban evangelism which seemed to be quite effective. He used five or six Burman assistants to visit every lane and corner of Moulmein and neighbouring villages, preaching and distributing tracts. Judson and these assistants met every morning in his study to pray and to report the work and successes of the previous day. This briefing session gave an excellent opportunity for correcting mistakes and furnishing new topics for argument and conversation. (1853b Wayland 82).

After a year's trial of this method, Judson wrote, "More preaching has been done in Moulmein and vicinity during the past year than all the previous years together which we have spent in this place. It has brought in several converts and excited more religious inquiry... than we have ever known before. I have never adopted a plan which pleased me so much, and appeared to be fraught with so many benefits both to the assistants and the people at large... Ten such persons cost no more than one mission family; and for actual service they are certainly worth a great deal more. This is the way I think missions ought to be conducted".

**The Faithful Koo-chil is Baptized.** One baptism during

1835 brought special happiness to the Moulmein Christian group—that of the faithful Bengali Muslim cook, Koo-chil, who had risked his very life in Ava to help care for Mrs. Judson and baby Maria during Judson's long imprisonment. He had also been with Ann when she died in Amherst while her husband was again in Ava. The old man had resisted long and stubbornly, but after his Burmese wife had become a Christian, he slowly came to accept Christ himself. He felt deeply the responsibility of changing his religion, and when he made his formal request for baptism, he trembled all over. To this man and to other such faithful men, Judson and the other missionaries owed a great debt of gratitude for lightening their loads as they worked for God in the tropical climate to which they were poorly adapted. May all the "Koo-chils" receive an extra star in their crowns for their quiet and faithful service.

**Church Statistics in 1836.** At the time of the completion of the printing of the Burmese Bible in December 1835, it will be of interest to record the statistics of church membership.

#### BAPTIZED PREVIOUS TO 1836

| STATIONS            | Burman<br>& Mons | Karens | Foreigners | Total |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|------------|-------|
| Moulmein            | 104              | 118    | 181        | 403   |
| Tavoy               | 13               | 253    | 8          | 274   |
| Rangoon             | 55               | 35     | 2          | 92    |
| Ava                 | 12               | —      | —          | 12    |
| Other               | 4                | —      | —          | 4     |
| Total prior to 1836 | 188              | 406    | 191        | 785   |

## BAPTIZED IN 1836

|                      |     |     |     |      |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Moulmein             | 9   | 29  | 16  | 54   |
| Tavoy                | 3   | 88  | —   | 91   |
| Rangoon              | —   | 206 | —   | 206  |
| Ava                  | 7   | —   | —   | 7    |
| Total for 1836       | 19  | 323 | 16  | 358  |
| Total from beginning | 207 | 729 | 207 | 1143 |

**Judson's Later Literary Work.** With the closure of Burma proper to mission work, and with a throat trouble which made preaching difficult, Judson applied himself more willingly to his literary work, aided especially by Ko En. He felt that it was the main duty of the rest of his life to perfect the Burmese translation of the Bible. He recorded that he had spent more time in the revision of the one-volume edition of the Bible that came off the press in 1840 than he had in its original translation.

With this 1840 revision completed, Judson began work on the preparation of two dictionaries, the first, English to Burmese, and the second, Burmese to English. When the Mission Board urged him to undertake this project in 1838, he was dead-set against it: "I must not do it; I cannot do it unless the Board expressly orders it...But before they order the only remaining preaching missionary in the place to spend his time in making books, and above all a dictionary, I beg they will deeply consider the propriety of appointing him a preaching colleague." But as he began work on the dictionary, he saw that it was like "a causeway, designed to facilitate the transmission of all knowledge, religious and scientific, from one people to another."

**Increasing Health Problems.** The population of Moulmein had doubled, and the missionaries connected with the press and schools already had their hands full. Judson himself preached in Burmese every Sunday and every evening in addition. There was no other missionary available with



an adequate knowledge of Burmese to relieve him of this preaching work. Further, his health was far from good since he had had malaria from November to March yearly for the past nine years. In addition, his throat was beginning to trouble him so much that at times he had difficulty in preaching. He had completed a quarter of a century in Burma without a single furlough to his homeland, and was completing his fiftieth year on August 8, 1838. He had lived to see a church of a thousand members and had himself baptized the first Burman, the first Mon, and the first Pa-o Christians, and had prepared Ko Tha Byu, the first Karen to become a Christian. (1853b Wayland 99).

**Sarah Judson Dies on Way to America.** Judson's own poor health and that of his wife, Sarah, again and again interrupted the work. Finally, to save her life, they agreed to a long sea voyage which ended for her on the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic where she was buried. Dr. Judson went on to America for his one and only visit to his native land. There he was so warmly received that he was embarrassed and retiring, and prevented from fully expressing his thoughts by the worsening throat condition.

Before returning to Burma he was married to Miss Emily Chubbuck whose well-known pen name was Fannie Forester. Together they returned to Moulmein accompanied by the Norman Harris and John Beecher families and a Miss Lillybridge, arriving there November 30, 1846, after a voyage of 140 days.

**The Judsons Try to Settle in Rangoon.** Since the Judsons found Moulmein to have a full complement of Burmese and Karen-speaking missionaries, they moved to Rangoon where they hoped to be able to find more expert help with the dictionaries, and where they could make one last attempt to give the gospel to Burma. The Burmese converts who met them there numbered only eight or ten, but Karens flocked in from the outlying areas. The Governor, being an old acquaintance from Ava days, received the Judsons kindly and offered to give Judson a letter to the king if it was

necessary to go to the capital to complete the dictionary. However, shortage of mission funds not only kept him from taking the opportunity to visit Ava, but made it impossible to pay even the fifty rupees per month rent for "bat castle" where they lived in the Muslim quarter. This lack of funds, combined with sickness, a shortage of food during Buddhist lent, and restrictions on evangelistic activities, caused the Judsons to return to Moulmein.

**Missionary Build-up in Moulmein.** In that town the number of missionaries was greater than could be efficiently used in one place—eleven in Karen work, nine in Burmese, two in Mon, and one couple at the press. Also there were inadequate funds available for conducting the work. Yet with Burma all but closed to missionary effort, and Arakan so unhealthy that appointment there was like a death sentence, there really were very few areas where the surplus missionaries could be assigned. However, though they could not know it at the time, the newer missionaries were getting a good opportunity for language study that stood them in good stead when Lower Burma was again open to Christian work in 1852-53. When that time came, a reserve of trained personnel was available to take immediate advantage of the opportunity.

Back in Moulmein, surrounded by this growing staff, Judson continued to work on the dictionaries during 1848 and 1849. Just as he completed the English and Burmese volume at the end of 1848, he was able to obtain the invaluable services of an excellent Burmese scholar, once a priest at Ava.

**Judson's Last Voyage.** A year later Judson became seriously ill with malaria and grew steadily weaker. Finally on April 3, 1850, leaving behind his critically ill wife, he was carried aboard a ship, accompanied by Mr. Ranney of the Press, to see if an extended sea voyage might save him, but he never rallied, dying on April 12, 1850. He was buried at sea not far from the Andaman Islands.

**Comparison of Burmese and Karen Churches.** The Burmese churches which had come into being through the love and devotion of the Saviour working through Dr. Judson,



appeared small as compared with the Karen church. This was not due to lack of effort on the part of the missionaries, for during the first twenty years of Christian work in Burma the entire effort was for Burmese people, and even in the late 1840's approximately 50% of the missionary staff was assigned to Burmese work. So far as the Rangoon church was concerned, it is true that it was far weaker in 1853 than it had been in 1823, but the wonder is that there was any Burmese church at all left in Rangoon after the long years of religious restriction and pressure which the members had experienced. It is safe to say that had it not been for the faithful leadership of Pastor U Tha Aye that this church might have disappeared entirely during the years when Burma was closed to missionary endeavours. This Burmese church was the first example of self-direction and self-support in all Burma.

It must be recognized that Karens accepted the Christian gospel far more readily than the Burmese. Dr. Judson, on comparing notes on this subject with Dr. Mason, remarked after baptizing two Burmans, "When I laboured among the Karens at the commencement of that mission, I baptized about one hundred

*The dying Judson carried aboard ship.*





converts, and the whole of them did not cost me as much labour as it has to bring in these two Burmans." (1836 Mason 102).

At another time Dr. Judson used this example to illustrate the same point. He spoke of a man offering to fill two earthenware jars, one of which stood empty and the other filled with earth oil, called in Burmese *stinking water*. The man goes to the owner of the empty jar and asks him if he may fill it with pure and sweet water. "Oh, yes, I shall consider it a favour." So the Karen receives the truth, the benefits of a written language, the instruction in books and the elevation that follows, as favours conferred; and as there are few stains from ancient superstitions, he becomes a good Christian.

But let the Christian teacher next go to the owner of the jar filled with earth oil. He must first empty it, which the owner considers great waste. He would say, "You are taking away my property; this is my merit which I have been many years gathering. You wish to deprive me of my offerings." But the teacher says, "If you drink that oil it will poison you; let me give you water which will insure life eternal."

"Oh, my ancestors have all drunk this and I wish to do the same; this is good for me and yours for you." But after long argument and persuasion, he gains the man's consent to give up the earth oil, and he labours through the process of dipping it out and cleansing the jar. He rubs and he washes, and bystanders may say, "We do not perceive that the water is any sweeter than the oil." Sometimes the man himself agrees that the smell is as bad as before and the change has been of no use, so he upsets the jar and starts to fill it with oil again. But fortunately the process often results in a thorough cleansing and an appreciation of the new which is the greater for the long struggle involved. When this happens, the change is a happy one and forever. (1853b Wayland 253).

**The End of an Epoch.** With the death in 1850 of Dr. Judson, who has rightly been called the father of American missions, and with the Second Anglo-Burmese War which in 1852 brought all of Lower Burma as far north as Prome and Toungoo under British control, the first great epoch of Baptist Missions

came to an end. This was a period during which the work had been directly under the influence of the revered founder; a period which saw the translation of the whole of the Scriptures into Burmese and Sgaw Karen, the New Testament into Mon, and parts of it into Pwo Karen. It was a period during which churches and schools had been established for the Burmese, Mons, Karens, and English, many with their own trained leaders. First converts had been baptized from the Asho Chins, the Pa-os, the Kemees, the Indians, and the Chinese. It was an era when every new church member was a first generation Christian, a follower of Christ only because he chose to be, often in spite of heavy pressure to prevent him. It was a period during which, in spite of high mortality rates, a capable and dedicated group of missionaries had been built up, ready to extend the Christian witness to the Burman first and then to other language groups of the country.

In this first epoch of introducing the church to Burma, the missionary was the man of all work: he had few to help him. Nothing was begun, nothing went on without him. All preaching, teaching, conversation, writing, translation and printing devolved on him. He had to come into direct personal contact with the mind of every inquirer; he was the centre and source of religious light to all around him.

At length converts multiplied and became most valuable helpers as the church was established. But the independent national pastors such as U Tha Aye in Rangoon were the exception rather than the rule. Initiative was still largely with the foreign missionary; in addition to the tasks he had been carrying, he became the superintendent, guide, and stimulator of his fellow helpers—the missionary assistants—who were thoroughly identified with their fellow countrymen and who could do many things more efficiently than their missionary colleagues. Their training was of an importance second only to the winning of new followers to Christ.

This picture began to change somewhat in the last decade of the period when children of Christian families grew up and the problems and opportunities of second-generation Christians began to appear. Self-support and initiative de-

veloped markedly in the Karen churches of Tavoy, Moulmein, and the Irrawaddy delta, including the refugee Karen churches on the Arakan coast. "Self-starter" models were becoming less of a rarity.

## STATISTICS FOR 1850 AT THE END OF THE JUDSON ERA

|                 | Stations |    | Outstations |     | Missionaries and wives |     | Preachers & Assistants |    | Churches | Baptized in 1850 | Church Membership | Boarding Schools incl. Normal & Theo. |  | Pupils | Day Schools |  | Pupils | Pages Printed |
|-----------------|----------|----|-------------|-----|------------------------|-----|------------------------|----|----------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--------|-------------|--|--------|---------------|
| Moulmein Burman | 2        | 9  | 15          | 12  | 3                      | 7   | 193                    | 1  | 105      | 6                | 206               | 4,310,400                             |  |        |             |  |        |               |
| Moulmein Karen  | 1        | 13 | 8           | 27  | 12                     | 61  | 1681                   | 4  | 147      | 2                | 24                |                                       |  |        |             |  |        |               |
| Tavoy           | 2        | 14 | 12          | 19  | 13                     | 47  | 975                    | 4  | 116      | 16               | 277               | 784,780                               |  |        |             |  |        |               |
| North Arakan    | 2        | 2  | 8           | 8   | 2                      | 4   | 55                     |    |          |                  |                   |                                       |  |        |             |  |        |               |
| Sandoway Arakan | 1        | 44 | 5           | 48  | 44                     | 773 | 5000                   | 3  | 50       | 20               | 200               |                                       |  |        |             |  |        |               |
| Totals          | 8        | 52 | 48          | 114 | 74                     | 892 | 7904                   | 12 | 418      | 44               | 707               | 5,095,180                             |  |        |             |  |        |               |



# 16 A Glimpse at Burma's Political History

1753-1886

**A**t the point when Baptist work in Burma was forty years old, let us glance back at Burma's political history before looking ahead to the second half of the Nineteenth Century.

(1950 Hall 87-176; 1956 Maung Maung).

When the Judsons arrived in Burma in 1813, Bodawpaya, eldest surviving son of King Alaungpaya, founder of Burma's last dynasty<sup>1</sup> was ruler of the Burmese Empire.

The events narrated in chapters 1 to 3 of this Baptist history occurred during the reign of King Bodawpaya, and those in chapters 4 to 12 during the reign of King Bagyidaw. Although religious toleration was not officially granted to Burmans wishing to become Christians during these two reigns, actually the growing

## 1. THE KINGS OF THE LAST BURMESE DYNASTY WITH PERIODS OF THEIR RULE:

1753-1760 Alaungpaya, founder of the Konbaungset dynasty.

1760-1763 Naungdawgyi

1763-1776 Hsinbyushin, "Lord of the White Elephants", son of Alaungpaya

1776-1782 Singu, eldest son of Hsinbyushin.

1782-1819 Bodawpaya, eldest surviving son of Alaungpaya.

1819-1837 Bagyidaw, grandson of Bodawpaya.

1824-1826 *First Anglo-Burmese War*: Arakan and Tenasserim came under British control.

1837-1846 Tharrawaddy, younger brother of Bagyidaw.

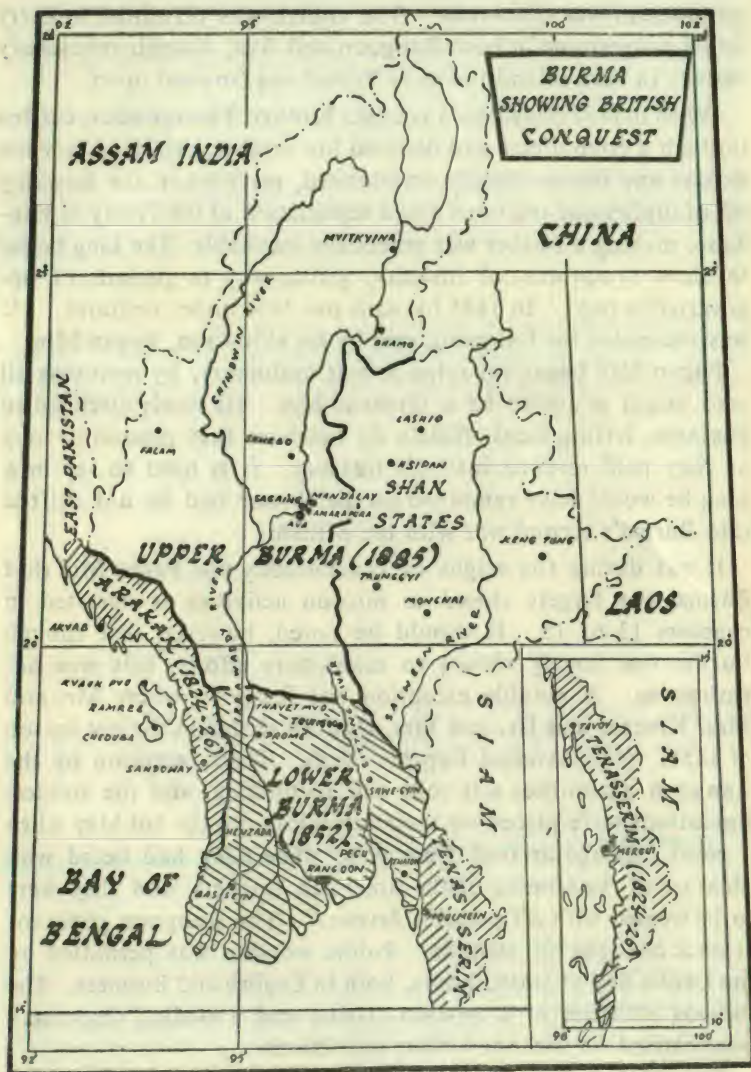
1846-1853 Pagan Min, eldest son of Tharrawaddy.

1852-1853 *Second Anglo-Burmese War*: Lower Burma added to the British-ruled section.

1853-1878 Mindon, half-brother of Pagan Min.

1878-1885 Thibaw, the last king of the dynasty, deposed by the British.

1885 *Third Anglo-Burmese War*: the remainder of Burma came under British rule.



Christian community was given considerable freedom so far as the government was concerned. The church was permitted to carry on its programme in both Rangoon and Ava, though missionary activity in such inland towns as Prome was frowned upon.

When in 1837 Bagyidaw's younger brother, Tharrawaddy, carried through a coup d'etat and deposed his brother, relations between Britain and Burma rapidly deteriorated, resulting in the breaking off of diplomatic relations and a repudiation of the Treaty of Yandabo, making a further war practically inevitable. The king began to show symptoms of insanity, giving way to periods of ungovernable rage. In 1845 his sons put him under restraint. He was succeeded the following year by his eldest son, Pagan Min.

Pagan Min began his reign as was customary, by removing all who might prove to be a threat to him. He rarely attended to business, letting local officials do much as they pleased so long as they paid revenue into his treasury. It is hard to say how long he would have remained on the throne had he not drifted into Burma's second war with the British.

It was during the reigns of Tharrawaddy and Pagan Min that Burma was largely closed to mission activities as narrated in chapters 13 to 15. It should be noted, however, that though Burma was largely closed to missionary efforts, this was not entirely so. A notable exception was Rangoon where Mr. and Mrs. Kincaid and Dr. and Mrs. Dawson settled in the hot season of 1851. (1852 Annual Reports 68-9). Their reception by the Rangoon authorities was cold and forbidding, and the strictest limitations were placed on their activities until the 3rd May when a royal message arrived from Ava, "The King had heard with pleasure of the coming of the American teachers, and they were to be treated with all possible favour." The Rangoon governor at once changed his attitude. Public worship was permitted on the Lord's day at stated hours, both in English and Burmese. The various activities of a mission station and a medical dispensary were carried on without further restrictions.

The mission house and dispensary were often crowded with people. When word reached the districts that missionaries were again in Rangoon, large numbers of people visited them from as



far away as 150 miles. During a twenty-day visit by Mr. Vinton, more than 200 Karens came in, including all the assistants. Two Burman assistants went to visit the Karen churches east of Rangoon and subsequently the churches to the north and north-east. Four Burmans and five Karens were baptized.

This encouraging work was unfortunately interrupted late in November when war steamers arrived in Rangoon demanding redress of supposed grievances on behalf of the East India Company. Maung Ok, the governor of Pegu Province, had arrested two British sea captains in what the British considered an attempt to extort money from them and their crews.

The court at Ava recalled Maung Ok but replaced him with a man who favoured an uncompromising attitude, believing that the Burmese army could resist a British invasion. He at once strengthened the garrisons at Martaban and Bassein.

When conditions grew critical, Mrs. Kincaid, who was a British subject, took refuge on a British ship, and Mr. Kincaid, because of his knowledge of Burmese, was asked to accompany a British delegation to the City Governor in connection with the disagreement. Mr. Kincaid must have found this task most embarrassing when the leader of the delegation insisted that they ride their horses right into the compound, contrary to Burmese custom. (1939 Pearn 166-7).

When the Governor quite rightly refused to receive the delegation, British ships blockaded the port. Burmese shore batteries opened fire but were silenced by the superior English guns. Then followed the sinking of all Burmese boats within reach of the British ships.

Lord Dalhousie at once prepared for war and sent a strong force with an ultimatum and a demand for one million rupees compensation. He still hoped that the court of Ava would back down, but on April 1, 1852, the ultimatum expired without any reply from the Burmese authorities. A few days later the British forces occupied Rangoon and Martaban, and the Second Anglo-Burmese War had begun. The immediate cause was trivial, but in the struggle going on between France and Britain for control of the East, the British did not dare to seem to be too weak to enforce

their demands.

At first it seemed that the British intended only to make the Burmese come to terms, but when the Burmese determined to play a waiting game in the hope that disease would defeat the British troops, Dalhousie decided to annex the lower Burma province of Pegu, thereby joining Arakan to Tenasserim by a land bridge. The town of Prome was occupied by November, and by December 20, 1852, the whole of Pegu was in British hands. The line eventually established between the British and Burmese-held sections of the country ran east-west cross country from Arakan through a point fifty miles north of Prome, to Toungoo and Karenni. Major Arthur Phayre was made the first Commissioner.

During the British advance on Prome, a revolution started in Amarapura. Prince Mindon, half-brother of the king and leader of the anti-war party, went underground. In February 1853 the *Wungyis* of the Council deposed king Pagan Min and invited Mindon to take his place. It is from this point in Burma's history that the story of the church in Burma is continued in the next chapter.

The new king, a sincere Buddhist who hated bloodshed and who had a high sense of public duty, attempted to negotiate peace. But because of the stubborn fighting of such resistance leaders as Maung Myat Tun, it took three more years before conditions quieted down. Although no treaty was ever signed, co-operative relations were established.

Mindon is regarded by the Burmese as the best ruler of his line. He introduced modern methods of administration and fixed the salaries of the higher officials, meeting them from the *Thathameda* tax of K 10.00 per household. He moved the Burmese capital from Amarapura to Mandalay in 1860.

The British hope for trade with China, via the old Burma Road from Bhamo to Yunnan, was deferred by the Panthay Revolt which closed Yunnan to both Burmese and British traders between 1855 and 1873. In 1866 the heir apparent to the Burmese throne was murdered, resulting in disturbed conditions for some years.



The latter part of the Nineteenth Century was a time of tremendous activity on the part of Britain and France to expand their trade in Southeast Asia and China. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 gave both a shorter sea route between Europe and the East. The British hoped to extend their China trade via Burma's Irrawaddy River up to Bhamo and thence across the mountains of West China. At the same time the French were working up from Cambodia which they seized in 1863.

When King Mindon died in 1878 without naming his successor, Prince Thibaw was put on the throne by the ministers. He was dominated by his young wife, Supayalat, who arranged for the elimination of all possible contenders for the throne. This roused British reaction. A little later the British Residents were withdrawn from Bhamo and Mandalay following a dispute over the Burmese requirement that all visitors remove their shoes in the royal presence.

Other difficulties multiplied in Upper Burma: armed robberies, a Kachin rebellion, the sacking of Bhamo by Chinese insurgents, and the Shan *Sawbwas* throwing off their yoke of allegiance to Thibaw. Further elimination of possible contenders for the throne brought loud demands from the Chinese and British business people in Rangoon for the annexation of Upper Burma.

The French unwisely tried to arrange an alliance with Burma, making the British very suspicious of their intentions. Thibaw evidently hoped to play off the French against the British, a serious error since his approach to the French hastened the British resolve to depose him. In 1885 when a French consul arrived in Mandalay, promising arms in exchange for extensive concessions, British feelings were further heightened. Then in 1885 when the *Hlutdaw* fined the Bombay-Burma Company £ 180,000 for a supposed over-extraction of teak logs, the British government appealed the fine. Thibaw waited two months before communicating his refusal, still hoping for French support.

The British army was ordered to advance on Mandalay, operations beginning on November 14, 1885. Two weeks later



Mandalay was occupied and Thibaw had surrendered. The conquest of Burma as a whole and the re-establishing of order took much longer. Furnival sums up the situation by saying that the annexation must be regarded as an episode in the rivalry between the British and the French for supremacy in Southeast Asia.

We shall now trace the development of the church during the turbulent period between 1852 and 1886 when Burma, rather too late, made a desperate bid to cultivate friendships and commercial relations with European powers, to get her independence and neutrality recognized, and to go quietly about building herself into a modern nation. (1956 Maung Maung 63). But the tidal wave of economic and political pressure from the European world swept inland, destroying the final stronghold of the Burmese kings.

## 17 Problems of Priority

1852-1853

**T**HE church had many decisions to make when all of Lower Burma came under British control at the end of the Second Anglo-Burmese War. Large areas were then reopened to Christian work which had been largely closed during the reigns of Tharrawaddy and Pagan Min. (See chapters 13 to 16).

The young church leaders now had to face the question whether Moulmein should continue as the main centre of Christian work or whether Rangoon should resume its primary position as in earlier days. Would Rangoon or Bassein be the better centre for Karen work? Should Arakan continue to be occupied in spite of its unhealthy climate, and how important were Tavoy and Mergui in the south?

Should institutions such as the central Theological School and the Press remain in Tenasserim or be shifted to Burma proper? Should Christian schools teach English or should primary and secondary education be limited to the vernaculars?

Now that the Baptist Mission was no longer a one-man organization, there were the problems of arranging and providing housing, health facilities, and furloughs for a growing staff. There was the question of the use of special gifts to individuals and of financial records and reports. There was the question whether the staff which worked with different language groups should form separate missions or function as a single unit. Then the question was raised of the desirability of forming a convention or conference of missionaries which would meet regularly every third year.

The Baptist churches in America were having to face decisions

also. As the record of the 38th Annual Meeting of the American Baptist Missionary Union recorded in 1852, "Burma is open. Are we ready to meet it? What responsibilities does it lay upon us? What does it call us to do? ... The committee is oppressed in view of the magnitude of the enterprise and the demands which it will inevitably make, year after year, on the liberality, the self-denial, the constancy, of American churches."

If American churches were to raise the money and men necessary to maintain the work already established in Tenasserim and Arakan; if they were to found new stations in Bassein, Henzada, Prome, Toungoo, Shwegyin, and Pegu, and to re-establish work in Rangoon and Ava, then at least twelve new families would have to be appointed with an additional budget of \$15,000. After honestly facing the problems involved, the Missionary Union determined to start work in Rangoon, Bassein, Prome, and Pegu during 1853, and in the other main towns the following year if funds and staff would permit. (1853 Annual Report 228-232).

**Missionary Convention of 1853.** In order to secure the closest possible consultation and reach a common understanding, the Missionary Union decided to send a deputation to Burma consisting of Rev. Solomon Peck and Rev. James N. Granger. They arrived in Moulmein in time for the Convention of Burman and Karen Missionaries<sup>1</sup> held during April and May 1853.

National Assistants present at some of the meetings included Sayas Dway. Oung Moo, Shway Doke, Zu Thee, Shway A, and Avung. Rev. Jonathan Wade was chosen as president of the Convention, Rev. N. Brown of Assam as vice-president, Rev. C. Bennett as secretary, and Dr. J. Dawson as assistant secretary.

1. Present at this convention were the following and their wives:  
*Moulmein Burmese Mission:* J. Wade, T. Simons, J. Haswell, E.A. Stevens, and T. S. Ranney.  
*Moulmein Karen Mission:* N. Harris, W. Moore, C. Hibbard, and J. Vinton  
*Tavoy Mission:* C. Bennett, B. Thomas, D. L. Brayton, J. Benjamin, and T. Allen.  
*Arakan Mission:* L. Ingalls, H. E. Knapp, and J. R. Nisbet.  
*Sandoway Mission:* H. L. Van Meter.  
*Ava Mission:* E. Kincaid, and Dr. J. Dawson.  
*Assam Mission* by invitation: N. Brown.  
*Hongkong Mission* by invitation: W. Dean.  
*Absent:* F. Mason of Tavoy, C. C. Moore of Arakan, and J. S. Beecher of Bassein. (1955 Torbet 128).



**Ideas on Methods of Evangelism.** This Convention of 1853 was a new and stimulating experience for the missionaries. Scattered as they were in their work, this chance to see each other and compare notes on methods and experiences almost took priority over the main purpose of the conference—planning the extension of the Christian programme into Lower Burma. They wanted to learn what their fellow workers had to say about the relative importance of different methods of evangelism.

All agreed that medical practice or the establishment of dispensaries should be included as a means of evangelism. Just as Christ commended his benevolent message to men by curing their diseases, so the missionaries felt that they, too, should copy his example by coupling the curing of the body with the enlightenment of the mind. They recommended team work between a doctor and a preacher, believing that one profession was quite enough to demand all the strength of one man, especially if he had the extra work of learning a new language. (1853 Convention 11).

As for the use of tracts in evangelistic work, all considered them to be of great usefulness provided they presented scripture truth in a style adapted to the understanding and taste of the people. They thought that tracts should not be just little “scrip-pets”, but complete enough to present the saving doctrines and to explain the simple precepts of the Gospel in the idiom of the people and in the spirit of Christianity.

Such tracts could serve as a visiting card, or a letter of introduction in the hand of the missionary; or it might be used as a textbook from which to address the people who would then more eagerly want to understand the pages which had been explained to them.

As a special method of evangelism, there was a proposal, made originally by Dr. Judson and renewed by the American and Foreign Bible Society, to place one copy of the Burmese Bible with the head man of every town and village where Burmese was understood, with the hope that the residents might be evangelized by the distribution of the Scriptures alone. (1853 Convention 16, 55, 58).

The matter was discussed thoroughly by both missionaries and national leaders. All agreed that very little could be expected from the general distribution of the Bible, without anyone to explain it, because many of the terms used in translation, though the best available in the Burmese language, yet did not convey the significance of the original texts until they were defined and their Christian usage explained.

For instance, the term used for God is *paya* or *payathakin*; yet these terms suggest to a Buddhist a pagoda, or a Buddha—a man possessed of super-natural powers. The term for Satan is *malnat*, known to the Burmese as an enemy of Gautama who came down upon him with a thousand arms, each carrying a weapon, and riding an elephant six hundred miles long, who, when defeated in his attempt to destroy Gautama by force, brought forward his three daughters to tempt him. These instances, provided by Dr. Mason (1856), show why it would be almost useless to expect that even Judson's excellent translation could, without explanation, enable a Burman to understand the subjects of the Gospel message.

The missionaries concluded that it would be both unwise and impracticable to try to distribute the Bible as suggested. They recommended that it be given out only on preaching tours and as auxillary to the preaching. Judging from the fact that only 500 copies of the Burmese Bible had been distributed during the twelve years since the one-volume edition had come from the press, they estimated that only about 150 copies per year could probably be placed with persons sufficiently interested to receive them. This proposal, then, did not seem like a very promising method of evangelizing Burma.

**Ideas on Preaching.** The subject matter of all preaching, they agreed, should be *the way of life* through Jesus Christ. There should be an appeal to the heart rather than to the intellect, to the moral rather than to the mental. The Gospel, in simplicity and in love, they believed to be the preaching ordained of God for saving men.

They also agreed that preaching should be held at stated times in the chapel, or in the room used for the chapel, but that this



formal preaching needed to be supplemented by preaching in the zayat and from house to house in the villages.

**National Pastors for the Churches.** Another important subject discussed at the Convention was the securing of pastors. There were then 117 churches connected with the Burman and Karen Missions, with a membership of some 10,000 converts, but with only eleven ordained pastors. Although missionaries had served as pastors in the infancy of the church, they believed that a long continued supervision would weaken the churches and incapacitate them for independence and self-support. Were missionaries to continue as pastors of individual churches, their efforts would be limited to groups of Christians instead of being extended to the thousands who had not yet decided for Christ.

In addition to the eleven ordained pastors, there were more than 120 national preachers. Many of these had been working in Burma proper where they had no chance to meet the missionaries. Most of these men had been raised up by God himself, and endowed with gifts and qualifications for the ministry. Others had sat side by side with their missionaries in the zayat; they had travelled to distant jungles and preached the crucified Saviour in valleys and on mountain tops. They had made the jungles ring with hymns and the praises of God, so that the missionaries, following in *their* footsteps, had found Christian groups already established. Many of these preachers were in charge of churches, while others were raising up new ones, their converts around them, waiting for the missionary to come and set in order their church organization. God was certainly raising up a pastorate for the churches. (1853 Convention 49-51).

The missionaries recommended that pastors be ordained for every church just as soon as suitable men, qualified as the Scriptures demand for this important office, were available. This recommendation did not imply that missionaries would stop teaching and guiding the new pastors and the infant churches under their ministry, but it did mean that these "sheep folds" would be so ordered and appointed that, were every missionary withdrawn, they would possess within themselves both trained men and the ability to continue as the witnesses of Christ,



In addition to pastors for new churches, national assistants were needed to work with the missionaries as evangelists to their own countrymen who were not yet followers of Christ. Since these evangelists were appointed with the understanding that they were not to engage in other employment to earn their living, they were to receive a regular salary or its equivalent either from the local churches or from Home Mission Societies. The amounts were to be determined by each mission in the light of local conditions and the living standards of the people. However, so far as the circumstances of different stations agreed, it seemed desirable that salaries should be comparable.

**Yearly Conference Recommended.** The missionaries agreed that a yearly conference of missionaries and national workers should be held in each station when they could review the work of the year and its results, so that the new year might be begun with fresh incentives to earnest devotion to the service of the Lord.

**Ideas of Pastoral Training.** The training of pastors and mission assistants was considered of major importance. The missionaries were convinced that such national leaders were to be the main agency for reaching the masses, and that in careful training of even small classes of devoted preachers, the missionaries would be exerting a permanent influence on coming generations.

In the infancy of the Burma church it was impossible that all pastors should be thoroughly educated men, but at least a *portion* of the national ministers needed to be well educated and enlightened if a healthy and stable church were to be established. Particularly among the Karens, who tended to mix their old traditions with the teachings of Christ, was there a need for careful training.

It was agreed that one general theological institution, and only one, was required for the training of pastors. They felt that with the co-operation of missionaries at the different stations, suitable candidates for training could be obtained without much difficulty. For the time being, at least, this central seminary should remain in Moulmein where buildings were available. For those students who could not go to this institution informal instruction might

continue as in the past. The missionaries were soon to find that such centralization was not at all easy to carry out, and that the goal of having only one seminary for the whole country was not very practicable.

**Ideas on Christian Schools.** More time was spent at the Convention discussing the mission system of primary and secondary schools than was given to any other subject. The missionaries hesitated to set up rules that would bind the various stations and language groups to any one system, for what was suitable for the Burmese might require essential modification before it could be introduced among the Karens. Each individual language mission should determine its own needs and make its recommendations to the Executive Committee in America for ultimate decision.

The missionaries did agree on the following principles:

1. Schools should be started and continued on a scale which could be financed and staffed without detracting from other mission work.
2. There should be clearly stated limitations both as to the number of students and the expenses, and these limits should not be exceeded without the express sanction of the Mission and the Executive Committee in Boston.
3. An ordinary missionary should not devote his time to schools beyond some general superintendence and help with the religious instruction, with the exception of normal and theological schools to which a missionary might be appointed full time.
4. Only a limited number of village schools should be opened for non-Christian students, and only when the teachers were all Christians and the textbooks were prepared by Christian authors. Such schools were to be a means of giving Christian instruction rather than a mere secular education.
5. Primary schools intended particularly for children from Christian families should be supported and managed largely by the group concerned.
6. Boarding schools were given a low rating as a means of evangelism because of their cost and the relatively few



pupils they touched, and because of poor results in the absence of continuous careful supervision. Less emphasis was to be given to such schools in the future.

On only one educational subject—the desirability of teaching English—were the missionaries seriously divided. The difference of opinion was such that no agreement could be recorded in the minutes, but the teaching of English was to be stopped. A number of missionaries felt that this prohibition unnecessarily curtailed the right of self-determination which had long been practised on the level of the mission station.

**Lower Burma Reopened to Christian Teaching.** Most of the Conference discussions reported above were connected only indirectly with the main purpose of the consultation—the study of the special opportunities presented by the opening of Lower Burma to active mission work. Facing the church leaders were the problems of what new stations to open, what experienced staff members to transfer there, and what changes to make in already existing work in Arakan and Tenasserim Provinces.

There was no doubt the necessity of again staffing Rangoon which for so many years had been the centre of Christian work under Dr. and Mrs. Judson. Mr. Kincaid and Dr. Dawson had been welcomed back there by the king shortly before the second war with the British. (See page 138). They could now return and carry on Burmese work until it was possible for them to re-establish church work in the capital.

Bassein was a second station about which there was complete agreement. The Sandoway Karen Mission had been the Bassein Mission in exile. As soon as the new administration was set up in the delta town, Messrs. Van Meter and Abbott had gone there by steamer from Moulmein to begin work without waiting for specific Mission Board sanction. (See chapters 13 and 19.) Now to set the record straight a year later, the Board asked the missionaries at the Convention to nominate one family to go to Bassein for Sgaw and one for Pwo Karen work. No missionary for Burmese work was



included although Bassein was in no way behind Rangoon as a centre of Burmese population.

**Problem of Remote Control.** The Deputation made it clear that no other missionaries than those selected by the Convention should leave present posts, and those so nominated were to wait the Board's approval of the nomination. This meant that from six to eight months would have to pass before replies and sanction could come to any of the suggestions from the field. At a time when everything was in rapid flux in Lower Burma, and when the need was urgent to secure property and determine programme, eight months was an impossible time to wait. (1853 Convention 5,61). One can understand the Board's fear that the missionaries, in their enthusiasm, might over-commit mission funds, but it seems clear that at that critical time, the Board should have given the missionaries authority to proceed within certain limits.

The Karen missionaries, especially, felt hampered in the development of the new work and programme in Rangoon and Bassein where they faced a serious refugee problem arising from the dislocations and passions of war. Misunderstandings which developed between some of the missionaries and the Board soon after the close of the Moulmein Convention resulted in the resignation of five of the leading Karen missionaries<sup>1</sup> in 1856. (1857 Annual Report 39,40).

Those who left the American Baptist Mission received an invitation to unite with the Baptist Free Mission Society which would act as their financial agent and sponsor in America. (18 Vinton 112).

The missionaries at the Convention recognized that the Board had the right to give "general instructions" for their guidance, but they felt that minute and specific instructions were normally unnecessary. They recognized, too, that at the

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1. Those who resigned from the American Baptist Mission were the J. H. Vintons, the D. L. Braytons, the A. T. Roses, the J. S. Beechers, and the Norman Harrises. Rev. N. Brown from Assam also resigned over the issue.

time of appointment of a new missionary, there was usually an understanding as to the field of labour and the kind of work to be done. It seemed right that there be no change from this understanding, except for strong reasons, and then by mutual consent of the missionary and the Executive Committee. They agreed that no missionary would be justified in leaving his post, or beginning work not originally assigned, except with Executive Committee sanction.

Yet—and here was the catch—in cases of emergency, it was recognized that it might be the duty of the individual to supply a vacancy, or secure a property if it should suddenly become available, or enter a new field without delay. In such cases he would be justified in acting on the recommendation of the Mission to which he belonged, pending a reference to the Executive Committee half the world away.

When special orders were sent out by the Executive Committee, the missionaries agreed that no mission or individual missionary had the right to suspend or alter them—*unless* there were reason to suppose that the Committee was labouring under some misunderstanding, or unless carrying out the order would be definitely harmful to the cause. In cases of this kind, a missionary might defer action on such orders until the final decision of the Committee could be obtained.

With Burma opening so suddenly, and with the need so great, who was really to know where emergency conditions began or ended? Who was to judge whether delays would be injurious to the programme? Only a missionary organization on the field, with authority to make decisions quickly, could have steered a course through the troubled waters. Such transfer of authority to the field organization was still far in the future. Therefore, at a time when harmony and sharing of responsibility between home Board and the field was most needed, separation and division occurred in the wake of the Deputation to the 1853 Convention at Moulmein.

**Drastic Re-location of Mission staff.** As has been indicated in chapter 13, a backlog of mission staff had been



building up in Moulmein before the war, as new missionaries arrived there for language study and orientation. Often they stayed on for some time before being assigned to places of work in Tenasserim or Arakan.

Following the 1853 transfers of missionaries to stations in Lower Burma, not a single family was left for Burmese work in the Moulmein Burmese Mission. The Jonathan Wades were transferred to the Moulmein Karen Mission to take the place of the Vintons who had gone to Rangoon. The E. A. Stevens were transferred to Burmese work in Rangoon, and the T. Simons to Burmese work in Prome where they were joined in 1854 by the Kincaids from Rangoon. With the Tavoy and Moulmein Presses combined under Mr. Bennett, Mr. Ranney resigned to establish a private printing plant in Rangoon, and Mr. A. T. Rose left the Mission to become head of the first government school in Rangoon.

This complete turn-over was partially compensated for by the two Mon missionary families, the Haswells and the Bixbys, staying on and agreeing to do what they could to help the Burmese as well as the Mons.

Though the Moulmein Karen Mission gained the Wades and kept the Hibbards, they lost the Vinton family and Miss Vinton to Rangoon, the Norman Harrises to Shwegyin, and the W. Moores to retirement. However in 1855 they welcomed a new missionary family, the D. Whitakers.

Tavoy and Mergui were almost as badly hit by the transfers as was Moulmein, the T. Allen family being the only experienced unit to remain in Tavoy to supervise that large field. The veteran, Dr. Francis Mason, and his wife went to open work in Toungoo. Cephas Bennett was transferred first to Moulmein Karen work and then to Mission Press and Burmese work in Moulmein. The B. C. Thomas family was transferred to the new Karen station in Henzada where they were joined in 1855 by the Crawleys, new recruits assigned to Burmese work.

From Mergui, the D. L. Brayton family was shifted to Danubyu to open Karen work; the J. Benjamin family went



to America because of poor health. The E. B. Cross family also went to their American home because of poor health but were able to return to Mergui in 1855.

So it was that from Tenasserim Province eight out of fifteen families were shifted to the newly opened towns in the deltas of the Irrawaddy and Sittang Rivers. These eight families joined the Kincaids and Dawsons who had already settled in Rangoon before the war.

**Relocation of Staff from Arakan.** But Arakan also had its contribution to make to the staff for Burma. In 1852 the Sandoway missionaries moved to Bassein where the Beechers were responsible for Sgaw Karen work and the Van Meters for Pwo Karen. They were joined in 1854 by the Douglass family, new recruits for Burmese work. Because of poor health, Mr. Abbott had already had to return to America where he died in 1855. With the shift of these Karen missionaries to Bassein, South Arakan was completely stripped of missionary staff.

In North Arakan the Ingalls family moved from Akyab to Rangoon to help with Burmese work. Mrs. Campbell returned from Kyaukpyu to America in 1853 after the death of her husband there in 1852. The C. C. Moore family had to leave Arakan in 1854 because of illness. In 1856 an attempt was made to bring in one more family, the A. B. Saterlees, but both husband and wife died within the year. The last Baptist missionary in North Arakan was the second Mrs. Knapp, her husband having died in 1853; she was transferred in 1857 to Toungoo and then Rangoon, leaving all of North Arakan without a single Baptist missionary. (1857 Annual Report 43).

Thus, both North and South Arakan lost *all* their missionary staff, and were left in very much worse condition than Tenasserim. It was not until several decades later that missionaries from Prome and Henzada pushed across the Arakan mountains to visit the Asho Chin people in the Sandoway area, re-activating mission work on the Arakan coast.

**Conclusion.** So it was that in the years immediately

following the Second Anglo-Burmese War, the Mission Board and the missionaries were faced with the need of evaluating established work and new opportunities, and of deciding the priorities for the new day. Time has shown that on the whole their decisions were wise. The mission "nest" was stirred and its members scattered to the main towns of Lower Burma. The only regrets are that misunderstandings arose between some of the missionaries and the Mission Board at a time when confidence and close co-operation were most essential, and that the transfers of personnel left Arakan without any help at all.

## 18 Back to Rangoon

1852-1862

**A**t the conclusion of hostilities in 1852 almost nothing was left of the old Rangoon along the river bank which Judson had known. That area had been razed to eliminate cover for the British invaders as they moved from the river towards the new fortified town which had been built in 1841 by King Tharrawaddy to the south and west of the Shwe Dagon Pogoda. (1939 Pearn 153).

**Plans for the New Rangoon.** After the British take-over on December 21, 1852, plans were made to rebuild old Rangoon on the plan we know today. The first layout was made by Dr. William Montgomery who helped with the planning of the new Singapore, and Lt. Fraser of the Bengal Engineers. Captain Phayre, who became the first Commissioner of Pegu Province, also made a number of valuable suggestions which added to the spaciousness of the new plans.

Though the plans for the new Rangoon were approved in 1853, the work was not completed until 1870, for in spite of the clean slate from which the planners started, the work was enormous and expensive. Much of the area required a fill of two to three feet to prevent flooding at high tide, and there was the complication of having to auction off all the sites as no pre-war property rights were recognized.

The report of the Rangoon churches for 1855 included the statement that the Pazundaung and Kemmendine churches were upset because of the British measures in laying out their newly acquired territory and dispossessing the people of their old residences. The Christian group regretted the situation particularly



because it embittered the population to foreigners and disinclined them to listen to the teachings of the new religion. (1856 Annual Report 77).

**New Baptist Compound Secured.** Free grants of land were made to all religious groups including the Baptist Mission. The old mission house where Judson had lived had been destroyed after the first war and was no longer used. Dr. Dawson recorded that Capt. Latter, the officiating magistrate, granted them the site on Merchant Street between 35th and Phayre on a part of which the A.B.M. Press building still stands. A temporary building on the other side of the road was fitted up for a hospital by Dr. Dawson which gave very useful service to both local residents and seamen until about 1860. (1939 Pearn 195).

On Merchant Street between 35th and 36th Streets, a residence was built for Rev. and Mrs. E.A. Stevens. Behind this, in the next decade, buildings for the Mission Press were erected together with a residence for Mr. and Mrs. Bennett. These buildings were used until they were replaced by the present Press building in 1903.

Next to the mission residence a chapel for Burmese and English-speaking congregations was built at the corner of Phayre and Merchant Streets. This building, dedicated on October 1859, was used until 1885 when the present site of Immanuel Baptist Church was secured at the corner of Barr and Dalhousie Streets, the old site being sold to help purchase the new.

**The Burmese Baptist Church.** The venerated pastor of the Burmese church, U Tha Aye, had survived the war but was getting rather feeble. When he died in 1856, U En of the Moulmein church was selected in his place. Regular Burmese services were held in the mission residence until the chapel building was completed. The congregation also maintained a zayat for preaching on Canal Street near Godwin Road. There the pastor and the missionaries did much of their work, hundreds hearing the word from them. A school was also started in connection with the zayat. This Christian centre developed into the Lanmadaw Baptist Church whose present building is

the U Naw Memorial, the largest Burmese Baptist church in Burma.

The register for the Rangoon Burmese church showed the members in good standing in 1856, the last year of U Tha Aye's long ministry.<sup>1</sup> (1857 Annual Report 55).

**Missionaries Working in Rangoon.** Rev. and Mrs. Ingalls were transferred to Rangoon from Arakan in 1854. Mr. Ingalls gave all his time to Burmese work, helping to organize a new Burmese church in Pazundaung, the village from which U Shwe Ngong had originally come. Mr. Ingalls recorded for August 19: "A council met to consult on the propriety of organizing a new church at Pazoondoung and ordained two men for the pastoral office. Fifteen members of the Rangoon church requested a dismission to be formed into this new church. The request was granted and the church constituted."

He also reported that three new inquirers from Kemmerdine had been with him and that soon a church would be planted in that great village, which, like Rangoon, had been laid out in chess-board pattern in 1855.

Mr. Ingalls died in 1856 after nineteen years of service mostly in Moulmein, Arakan, and Rangoon. His young widow remained for forty-six years of further service in Rangoon and Thonze. After his death, the burden of the evangelistic work for Burmans fell on Rev. E.A. Stevens who undertook to guide the work and train national leaders for the ministry.

The year 1860 was important for the formation of the Rangoon Burman Missionary Society and for the organization of the first Burmese Baptist Association at Thonze where the church already had ninety members. Mrs. Ingall's transfer to Thonze began a marked development on that field which brought it to the high point of its history. (see chapter 28.)

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Baptized from the year 1813 to June 1856     | 227 |
| Received from other churches                    | 26  |
| Died, excluded, and suspended within the period | 60  |
| Transferred to other churches                   | 92  |
| Irregular members who did not attend worship    | 29  |
| Members who could not be found                  | 17  |
| Members in good standing in 1856                | 55  |



Mrs. Knapp was transferred to Rangoon in 1858 where she was largely responsible for the organization of the Burman Female School Society. She superintended and taught in one school maintained by that Society in Kemmendine, and helped open another at the compound on the corner of Merchant and Phayre. She had the satisfaction of seeing prejudice against educating girls gradually overcome.

Mr. A. T. Rose of Arakan and Moulmein, was in Rangoon acting as head of the first Government High School. Though in government service, he continued to help the Christian programme in every way possible, again returning to mission service in 1862. His school, and the girls' school run by Mrs. Knapp, were considered to be the only places where children of Christian families could get a good education.

**Funds Short When Most Needed.** The years following 1853 were times of financial scarcity in American Baptist Churches, caused by the separation of the northern and southern churches over the slavery issue. The resulting decrease in giving to missions came at a very inopportune time for the developing programme in Burma where opportunity and need were unprecedented.

In July 1854 the Mission Board notified the Burma Missions of the seriousness of the situation. No provision could be made for additional lands or houses, none for schools, none for additional workers or new fields. More national workers would have to seek local support. Missionaries would have to restrict their expenditures for travel, and the appropriations for repairs and contingencies were cut to the lowest point. (1856 Annual Report 52).

The seriousness of the blow to the Burma Missions was reflected in a letter from Mr. Ingalls to the churches in America, written shortly before his death: "Tell the churches that the missionaries cannot endure what they put upon them. We must come and preach, and build houses and chapels without funds, and beg money; and the churches at home living in luxury...The churches at home, and every member, and every preacher of the gospel are as much bound to give the gospel to every nation as we are. And God will hold them responsible in 'that great day'."



Fortunately, local British Christian friends and others in Calcutta and Madras, and even in England and Scotland, responded liberally to the need with generous gifts which enabled the work to go on in the newly opened areas of Lower Burma. Their help during this time of need was of untold blessing.

**Mission Press Shifted to Rangoon.** The year 1861 was important for the transfer of the Mission Press from Moulmein to Rangoon. Buildings were constructed for it on Merchant Street where the Press building still stands. This move from Moulmein took place when Rangoon began to outdistance Moulmein as the main port and business centre of the country. (1862 Annual Report 35). Communications were speeding up: telegraphic connections were opened with India and sea mail was being routed across India by rail to catch a ship in Bombay for the Red Sea and the "overland" route to the Mediterranean, thence by ship to America. Correspondence with the Mission Board in Boston in the future was going to be several months quicker than before the war.

**Relief Work After the War.** But our story is getting too far ahead and we must return to 1852, immediately after Rangoon fell to the British. The situation of the Karen population in the villages around Rangoon was desperate, for with homes, crops, and food reserves destroyed in the heat of passions let loose at the time of the invasion of Lower Burma, they were literally starving. Rev. and Mrs. Vinton had moved from Moulmein to Rangoon in May of 1852 just after the fighting in the city had ceased. Spurred on by the needs of the seventeen Karen churches near Rangoon, by the urging of Eugenio Kincaid, and the unanimous agreement of the missionaries in Moulmein, they had not waited for the permission of the Board in Boston for this move. Four months earlier a letter signed by Mr. Kincaid, Dr. Dawson, and Mr. Vinton had been sent to America explaining the importance of such a transfer, but of course there had not yet been time for an answer.

On arrival in Rangoon, Mr. Vinton and his family were

given temporary accommodation in a large zayat within the palisades of Tharrawaddy's town close to the pagoda. Many Karens were already flocking in from their hiding places, and welcomed the missionary who was known to many of them, at least by reputation.

When a smallpox epidemic broke out among the refugees, the Vintons opened a small hospital near the zayat so that they could care for the worst cases with the help of Dr. Dawson. At the beginning, much of the Vintons' work was with these people, but Mrs. Vinton managed, too, to conduct a school for some 200 pupils. In it were gathered old men and women for whom spectacles had to be purchased, mothers with babes in their arms, fathers and sons sitting on the same bench, learning to read the word of God. All listened to the message of salvation willingly because it came from those who had proved their sincerity by feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, caring for the sick and dying, and providing for the orphan and widow. (1880 Luther 100).

Mr. Kincaid in a letter written about this time, says, "The Lord rolled on us an amount of labour never known by us before. The peoples' hearts were softened like wax. The arm of the Lord was made bare, and the gospel wrought mightily upon the people. We had preaching daily and every evening, male and female prayer meetings every week, baptizing converts every sabbath, hundreds cured of diseases.

"During the rains 250 Karens learned to read the word of God, who could not read before. Over thirty young men received biblical instruction preparatory to labour in the distant villages, some as preachers, some as school teachers.

"Such was our work, but not all. Thousands were suffering in all parts of the country; and they could go nowhere for advice and sympathy except to us, their teachers. No others could understand their language; no others could feel for them. Before the rains were over, gangs of three or four hundred dacoits (armed robbers) were ravaging the countryside ... Some five thousand families living in carts had come within eight miles of Rangoon to escape from



them...We visited these refugees in the wilderness. We found large numbers of our disciples, and their thankfulness to see us and hear us was deeply affecting...Such an assembly is rarely seen." (1880 Luther 101-102).

**New Ahlone Compound Secured.** Shortly after peace was declared, it became necessary for the Vintons to leave the ruined old zayat which had so far sheltered them, because the British government ordered the vacating of all religious buildings which had been occupied during and following the war. The Vintons moved to a beautiful spot called Ahlone<sup>1</sup> which was midway between Rangoon and the village of Kemmendine. Mr. Vinton acquired this land from the British authorities without waiting for sanction from Boston as the rules would have required. He started putting up buildings for the accommodation of his family and the large school which followed him to the new home.

**Famine Conditions Grow Worse.** The missionaries hoped that within a few more months, conditions of peace would be established, but such was not the case. The country had been so pillaged and laid waste that both Burmans and Karens began to feel the serious scarcity of food. Ship loads of rice came from Calcutta and quickly sold for six or seven times the usual price. Those who had money bought, but thousands had lost all to the robbers. They had eaten their last meal of rice and were subsisting on wild roots and herbs.

Mr. Vinton began giving out the little stock of rice which he had laid in for the school. This was soon exhausted and he secured a few hundred baskets more. But the news spread that there was rice at Teacher Vinton's, and people began coming in companies, begging him for food for their starving families. Soon the second store of rice was exhausted, and people were dying in the streets. Every morning the authorities sent out to collect and bury the dead.

After Mr. Vinton had given out the last measure of rice he had

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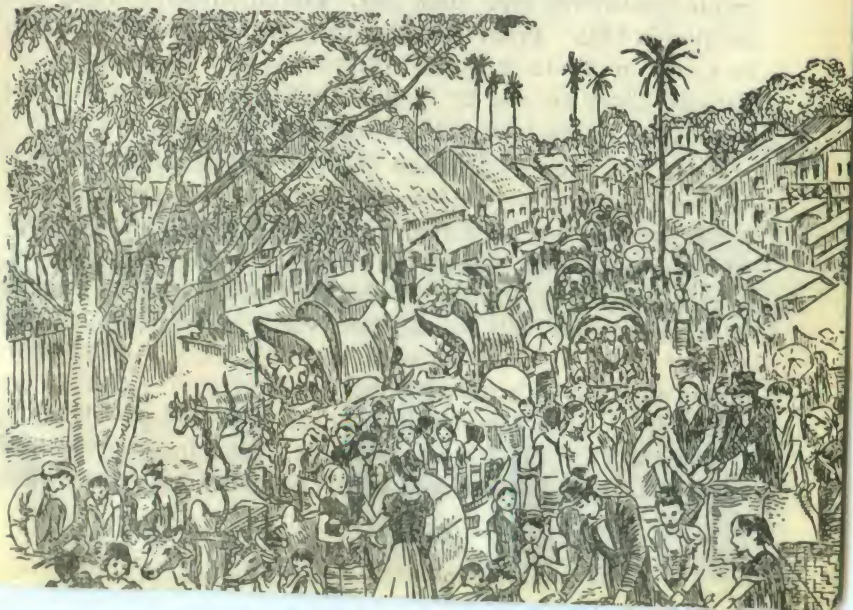
1. The writer can vouch for the beauty of this compound for it is his present home, where this history has taken shape.



in store, there were still thousands of suffering people who did not know where to look for their next meal. But he was not a man to stand wringing his hands while people were starving to death before his eyes. He went down to the rice merchants and said, "Will you trust me for a ship-load of rice? I cannot pay you now for I have received no remittance from America in over a year. If you will let me have the rice, I will pay you as soon as I am able." They answered, "Mr. Vinton, take all the rice you want. Your word is all the security we need. You can have a dozen cargoes if you wish."

**Revival Follows Famine.** It is doubtful if at the time anyone recognized the importance of this work of love. It was not till after the famine was over and Mr. Vinton went out among the people that he found that the help given had opened the hearts of the people to receive the message which he brought, as nothing else could have done. They gathered round him in crowds. They brought their wives and children to see their deliverer. They said, "This is the man who saved our lives and the lives of our little ones: his religion is the one we want." (1880 Luther 105-110).

*The Kincaids and Vintons spearhead relief work.*



Thousands were baptized, churches were organized, chapels and school houses were built, and the hearts of both Burmans and Karens turned toward God as never before. It was a happening which was repeated in South India during the famine of 1876 when Clough did so much to meet the need of the suffering people there.

**Misunderstanding With Board Increases.** While this wonderful work was being carried on with vigor and faith in Rangoon, a mounting misunderstanding was growing in the Board offices in Boston over the unauthorized steps which Mr. Vinton had been taking at a time when funds for mission work were so inadequate. First there was the unauthorized move from Moulmein, then the starting of a large school which included the teaching of English, and the running of a training school for pastors and teachers when the missionaries had agreed to have only a single theological school located in Moulmein. Finally there was the matter of Mr. Vinton's securing the large Ahlone compound without prior sanction. From twelve thousand miles away these cumulative actions looked like a refusal to follow Board policy. With the mail so slow, it seemed impossible to straighten out the situation; misunderstanding grew until Mr. Vinton withdrew from the mission in 1856. From that time forward, the funds with which he carried on his large mission programme were given largely by national Christians and by English residents who, for years, had watched with deep interest the progress of his work.

**Rangoon Home Mission Society Organized.** At Mr. Vinton's suggestion in 1854, the Karens of Rangoon District organized the Rangoon Karen Home Mission Society on the lines of similar societies already started in Tavoy, Sandoway, and Bassein. This organization enabled the Karens to work together in taking responsibility for their own needs just as soon as the crest of the emergency had passed. By 1856 there were forty-two Karen churches with over 2000 members working together. There were thirty-nine Karen preachers and thirty-six village schools.

The work of the Vintons was not limited to the environs of Rangoon. Both husband and wife were indefatigable travellers



to the villages where they preached the gospel of Christ's saving love. The need was so great and the villages so many that husband and wife did not travel together; instead, he went in one direction and she in another. Only occasionally their paths met at some jungle cross-road.

**Mr. Vinton's Unexpected Death.** Towards the end of the hot season of 1858 when Mr. Vinton returned home tired from a long and difficult jungle trip by elephant, he came down with fever and dysentery which brought his remarkable career to a sudden close. His death came as a terrible blow to the Karen churches. He had been a friend to them as no other man had. His mission associates of both the Free Baptist and American Baptist groups were equally distressed when the news of his death reached them. Mr. Kincaid wrote, "A person in British Burma has never died more deeply, more universally lamented." Sir Arthur Phayre said, "His death is a calamity to the country; who can supply his place in these provinces?"

Of Mr. Vinton as a man and a missionary, Mr. Kincaid's testimony was, "Beyond all men I have ever known, he had the talent of winning the confidence and love of the natives. They saw that he had no interest separate from theirs. He prayed for them as few men can pray. He preached to them as few men can preach. His heart was in all he did. The sick, the afflicted, the oppressed, soon learned to seek his aid and counsel; in him all found a friend, and, if not relieved, went back comforted."

Though the staunch leader was gone, his wife, Calista, determined to remain to carry on the work. With the aid of Mr. Brayton who had come back from Danubyu to carry on Pwo Karen work in Rangoon, and of Dr. Binney who had returned from America in 1859 to bring the Theological School from Moulmein to Rangoon, she pressed forward until the arrival from America of her son, J. Brainard Vinton, who joined her in 1862.

**Summary.** The decade 1852 - 1862 had seen the destruction of the city of Rangoon, the rise of the modern city



from the debris of war, the re-establishment of mission work for both Burmese and Karens, the unprecedented rehabilitation work during the dislocated post-war era, and the shifting of the Mission Press and the Theological School from Moulmein to Rangoon which had regained its central position in the country.

## 19 The ABC's of the Bassein Mission

1852 - 1868

**T**HE story of Bassein and the delta churches, centres round three early missionary leaders, Elisha Abbott, John S. Beecher, and Chapin H. Carpenter—the ABC's of the Bassein Mission. There were many other faithful members of the group, but these three captained the team one after the other, during the second half of the Nineteenth Century.

Martaban fell to the British on April 5, 1852, Rangoon on April 14, and Bassein shortly thereafter. Mr. Abbott had gone from Sandoway to Moulmein, sadly broken in health and spirits, but his mind was occupied with his scattered Karens and plans for their future. (1883 Carpenter 196).

On the 12th May, he wrote from Moulmein: "Bassein will become the centre of our mission operations, hitherto conducted from Sandoway. The war will throw everything into confusion. Villages and churches will be broken up and scattered, pastors killed, and everything in desolation. The work of years is to be done over again—villagers are to be gathered, churches to be re-organized, a station to be built up, provision made to meet the increased demand for trained preachers and school teachers; and the Home Mission Society, on which so much depends, to be resuscitated.

**First Christian Team Goes to Bassein.** Messrs: Abbott and Van Meter, accompanied by several young Karens including Saw Dahbu, Shahshu, Pu Goung, Yo-hpo, and Thah-ree, left Moulmein for Bassein on the steamer *Tenasserim*, July 10, covering the two hundred miles from river mouth to river mouth in thirty-two hours, then seventy miles up

the river to Bassein. The town was a sad sight with most of the houses between the massive wall and the river in ruins, and with stockades and fortifications in every direction. Most of the city's beautiful trees had been cut down to provide material for the stockades.

The few Karens in Bassein including Shwe Waing, a daring young chief, came to the steamer to welcome the Moulmein party, and immediately sent off runners in various directions to let the Christians know that the "teachers" had arrived in Bassein.

General Godwin and Major Roberts, the officers in command, put at their disposal a deserted and roofless monastery standing in a beautiful grove a short distance from the south gate of the town. This was to serve as a chapel, a school, and a mission house.

Two days later a number of Karens arrived from the district, including the ordained pastors, Thras Myat Keh, Po Kway, and Shwe Bo. All the visitors pitched in to help with the repairs. Mr. Abbott had such a sore throat and cough that he had to live on the steamer till the shelter ashore was completed. Mr. Van Meter, the Pwo Karen missionary, took the lead in the repair work. (1883 Carpenter 199). He was particularly interested to see how many non-Christian Pwo Karens came along to help. Evenings were spent in preaching and renewing old friendships. After a week of hard work, repairs were far enough along so that the first Sunday services could be held in the monastery with about ninety present—all men.

By the end of the second week, repairs were far enough along that the missionaries were able to leave their cabin on the steamer and move into their new quarters. Mr. Abbott was so much recovered that he was able to talk with the visitors and not seem the worse for it.

**Survey of Pastors' War Losses.** The twelve pastors in the group appointed a committee to inquire as to the losses of all the preachers in the Association and their present needs. They found that 200 rupees would be enough to meet



the needs of fifteen men who had received very little during the past two years. They also reported the ravages of cholera by which many had been swept away, including five preachers. One of these was Thra Myat Kyaw, the first Karen ordained to the ministry, who had baptized 1550 persons in Burmese-controlled Burma and organized churches during the period when no foreign missionary was permitted in the delta. The number he baptized afterwards must have totalled 1000 more. (1853 Annual Report 86).

**School Plans Formed.** The pastors also determined to begin a school, asking each village to select three or four promising boys that were most anxious to learn, and send them in by the next full moon. There proved to be no lack of applicants; the difficulty was to select from the mass the limited number it was practicable to receive. (1883 Carpenter 202).

Mr. Van Meter received a delegation from Kyutah village led by Mahn Thah Bwah, who reported that there were fifty-two worshippers in their village awaiting baptism. One of the old men in the delegation wept with joy at meeting the teachers. It was quite a moving experience for all of them to be actually back in the promised land after the suffering and uncertainty of the war period.

**The Church and Empire.** Perhaps it should be recorded at this point that the growth of the church has always relied on the faithful use of moral means; its successes have not necessarily followed the track of British arms. We recall that for the first foothold obtained by the Judsons in Burma, they were not indebted to British influence or the protection of any Christian government. They were then flying from British India in order to escape the persecution of the ruling power. They established themselves in friendly relations with the Burmese around them; they mourned over the ravages of war as an interference with their peaceful labors; and although they finally commanded the respect, won the hearts, and secured the protection of the British conquerors, they considered that their Christian message of repentance and

faith in Christ was as much for the conquerors as for the conquered. They were convinced that moral means and not might was in keeping with their Christian aims. (1852 Annual Report 15).

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that, with the British annexation of Lower Burma, wheels were set in motion which established a climate in which law and order gradually increased and all people grew in prosperity. But the blessings of peace were not immediate, ten years being required before the destruction of war was replaced by new outlooks and relationships. The church, as well as secular institutions benefitted from the cessation of strife. The country was no longer split between Burmese king and British rulers; there were neither cold wars nor hot wars, and this uniformity promoted peace and happiness. (1956 Maung Maung 80).

**Loss of Mr. Abbott.** By September, Mr. Abbott's health had so worsened that he was forced to go first to Moulmein for help and then to America. The Karens took leave of their revered teacher, the father of the Bassein Karen churches, with inexpressible grief as he left them for the last time.

Mr. Van Meter had to carry on alone for several weeks until he was joined by Mr. J. S. Beecher, formerly stationed in Kyaukpyu in Arakan. He was to be a worthy successor to Mr. Abbott in the reconstruction work at Bassein although he had not always seen eye to eye with him in the past. (1853 Annual Report 83).

**Lawlessness in the District.** Until British control could be established in the district in place of the previous Burmese rule, gangs of armed robbers roamed the tidal creeks, burning and looting at will. Villagers had to join together in self-defense until the government could extend its control from the towns to the country-side. As Dr. Maung Maung has pointed out (p. 71), wars are cruel, and during wars, and in their aftermath, passions, not laws, are apt to rule.

Because conditions were so upset at first, the Christians in Bassein tried to persuade refugees on the Arakan coast to



delay their return, but they were so eager to get home that they came before conditions were safe.

**Karens' Hunger for Education.** The new prospect seemed brighter than at any former period in the history of the mission. Many who were literally waiting for the gospel, were now accessible. The work before the church was greatly increased, requiring increased efficiency in every sector. The Sgaw Karen group felt that education was of prime importance if their community was to emerge from its largely illiterate state to take its full place in the life of the country. Conditions in the district hindered opening as many schools as they wanted, but by 1854 there were 330 pupils in village schools and 150 in the boarding school in Bassein. These numbers only equalled those of five years earlier; they had barely regained what they had lost during the war period, but they were determined to make further educational progress.

A proposal was made at the Association meeting to establish more advanced school at Kozu to be called an academy, with two or three similar schools to be opened in other areas. Mr. Beecher recorded the reaction of the Karen leaders to this idea: "For them to support their children at school in their own village, to send them to the missionary to be supported from foreign sources, are ideas which they can understand and appreciate; but to send their children to another Karen village to be taught by a Karen teacher, at the expense of their parents, is an idea which must be explained and urged again and again, before they will be half as ready to pay five rupees for tuition as they are to pay the same amount for tobacco. Whether we see anything like an academy this year or not, we expect to see common schools of a higher order, and in larger numbers, than we should have seen otherwise, and we hope for the day when academies worthy of the name, ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~run~~ <sup>run</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~supported~~ <sup>supported</sup> by the Karens, shall enlighten and adorn these provinces."

In the meantime there was the question of suitable text books and teachers for these schools. The need roused in the minds of the missionaries and national leaders the desirability of start-



ing a college to train the needed leaders, but such an institution was still sixteen years off. (See chapter 23). To meet the immediate shortage of teachers, the revolutionary idea was proposed "to employ female teachers, which though startling at first, as contrary to the customs of the people, was, on further thought, favorably received." (1856 Annual Report 80).

**Self-support Principle Adopted.** At the third quarterly meeting of the Ministerial Conference and Home Mission Society at Naw-p'-eh in October 1854, a great forward step was taken which marked a new era in the history of missions, when it was decided that the churches would undertake *the entire support of native preaching*, both in the churches and among the non-Christians.

A committee which studied the matter carefully, brought in the following resolution: "We, brethren Myat Keh, Shwe Baw, U Sah, and Tutanu, are agreed that for preachers and ordained ministers we should expend no more of the money of our American brethren. So far as there is occasion to help support them, we will do it ourselves. But for books and schools in greatly need help, and we request that our dear brethren in America will continue to aid us in these things."

Some of the pastors were not without misgivings as to the ability of the churches to support both pastors and native missionaries without aid from America. But after they learned that the funds of their own Society were sufficient to meet all the needs of the current year, and leave a balance of nearly three hundred rupees in their treasury, their misgivings gave way to a conviction of duty and a readiness to undertake to carry out the resolution. The action was nobly taken and it was historic. The Karen pastors for many years afterwards referred frequently to this meeting at Naw-p'-eh and to the resolution they had adopted with fear and trembling.

Old Thra Shwe Baw especially loved to rehearse the trial of his faith and the consequent blessing which came to him: "What it was announced at the meeting in Naw-p'-eh that no more funds were available for our support from America, my heart sank within me. What should we do? Brother Myat Keh

Brother Po Kway, however, said that it was no matter; the Lord would provide. Still I was very anxious and went home much cast down. Pretty soon one of the church members was looking around in my house, and saw that the salt jar was nearly empty. The next day he came and filled it. Not long after, one of the sisters observed that the mats were getting old and ragged and said that the teacher must certainly have some new mats; and the mats came. And so it was. There was no lack. Paddy, fish, clothes, and everything that we really needed, was supplied as abundantly as before. And how was it about the preaching? Before, we were not fully dependent on the churches. In a measure, we were sent and paid by the missionary. We felt our importance and perhaps we put on airs. But, after this, we could not help loving our people and working for their souls." (1883 Carpenter 242).

The resolution for self-support was important for the principle involved. The child is still many years from maturity when it begins to walk alone, but the future man is seen there. Time and training only are necessary to develop all his wonder-working powers.

**Kozu Academy.** The academy at Kozu got a good start and soon exceeded all expectations with fifty students the first term. Two other advanced schools were started a year later at Naw-p'eh and P'nah-thein. Parents began to ask for English as a subject, but since the Deputation of 1853 had ruled against teaching that subject, it could not be offered. Those in charge soon found that the limit of fifty students placed on the station boarding school was much too low for an Association of fifty churches with 5000 communicants. In less than nineteen years from the time the Karens of Bassein first heard the gospel, they were ready to understand the entire support of the pastors in their fifty churches and among the non-Christians around them. And, except for books and three or four teachers, they were also supporting the education of more than 800 pupils.

**Further Misunderstanding with Mission Board.** Union to the Corresponding Secretary of the Missionary Union in Bassein did not seem to comprehend the implication of the



unprecedented step towards self-support by the Bassein Karens; instead of expressing appreciation of the progress made, he took the position that if they could support their preachers and evangelists, that they should also be able to finance the school expansion for which they longed, without any help from the Board. His unsympathetic attitude hastened the separation of Mr. Beecher and the Bassein Sgaw Karen churches from the Missionary Union two years later. The Karens remained loyal to their missionary and refused to accept Mr. Thomas of Henzada whom the Board assigned to take over the responsibility for the Bassein work from Mr. Beecher.

**New Missionaries Arrive.** In November 1854 Rev. and Mrs. J. L. Douglass arrived in Bassein as the first Protestant missionaries assigned to help the Burmese people of the delta area. Though there were some 5000 Karen Christians in Bassein, there was not one Burmese disciple to help the new Burmese missionary get started. The first Burman to be baptized by Mr. Douglass the following July was a man who had first heard the gospel from Mr. Comstock years before in Arakañ. A crowd of about a thousand Burmans gathered to watch and listen as this first Burman in Bassein District declared his faith in Christ. (1856 Annual Report 35,81),

Just a month before the Douglasses arrived in Bassein, Rev. and Mrs. B.C. Thomas had been transferred from Tavoy to Henzada, some eighty miles north east of Bassein as the crow flies but twice that distance by meandering river. They were assigned to Karen work in the upper delta region. They were soon joined by Rev. and Mrs. A. R. Crawley who were assigned to the Burmese department of the Mission. The first Burmans to be baptized in Henzada were Ko Eng and his wife who had received a tract from Dr. Judson twenty-six years before. By 1856 five women had decided for Christ and joined the Burmese church. (1856 Annual Report 61).

After the departure of Mr. Beecher for America, Mr. Thomas was the only American missionary in the whole delta assigned to Sgaw Karen work, Mr. Van Meter the only one in the I. All work, and Mr. Douglass and Mr. Crawley for Burmese work start-



of these men spent much of their time travelling up and down the tidal creeks which interlaced the whole delta area, stopping to preach and give tracts in the villages clustered along the banks. Almost everywhere they were received kindly and great interest was shown in the things they had to tell.

**Ko Tha Byu's Wife Found in Delta Village.** On Christmas day 1857, while on such a trip, Mr. Thomas found in the village of Hawkaw P'Gah the wife of Ko Tha Byu, the first Karen convert. She had moved back across the mountains to this village not long after her husband had died in Sandoway. (See page 112). As Mr. Thomas sat talking with her about her evangelistic trips in Mergui, Tavoy, Moulmein, Rangoon, and Arakan provinces, he was moved to tears as he recalled the whole history of the Karen Mission, and all the wonders God had wrought among this people. This kindly old disciple was still living in this village in 1882 and planned to remain there "until God called her." (1883 Carpenter 278).

**Home Missionaries Sent Out.** The Bassein Karen Home Mission Society took particular interest in sending Karen missionaries to other parts of Burma to preach the gospel. In 1853 two men had been sent to Shwedaung on the east bank of the Irrawaddy below Prome, and two others to Henzada District. Between 1854 and 1856 six missionaries were sent to Toungoo to help Saw Quala and Mr. Whitaker in that newly opened field. These ten home missionaries from Bassein, together with the workers in their own district, were all supported by the Home Mission Society. (1883 Carpenter 253).

In 1858 Thra Po Kway and two younger men volunteered to go to the little known area north of Ava where they were to explore the country as far north as Bhamo and to establish the younger men in suitable places. This was proposed.

Since those early days of Karen mission outreach, they have sent other workers into the Asho Chin, the Zomi Chin, the Kachin, Lahu, Shan, Wa, and Thailand areas. Frequently these workers sent back boys from the frontier for an educa-

tion in Bassein. The first record of this is the seven students sent back from Toungoo in 1858.

Mr. Van Meter and his family returned to America early in 1858 just about the time the Beechers came back to Bassein under the sponsorship of the Baptist Free Mission Society. The Douglasses welcomed them warmly although they now represented two different Societies. Of course the Karens welcomed their missionary most joyfully. (1883 Carpenter 279).

**The Great Need—Christian Education.** On his arrival in Burma, Mr. Beecher saw clearly that the great need of the Christian communities in Bassein was increased facilities for Christian education. Up to that time they had received only twenty-six years of help from foreign missionaries, twenty years of that labour having been at arm's-length when the missionaries were restricted between the mountains and the sea in remote Arakan. Other mission stations had received more thousands of dollars in aid for schools and teachers than theirs had in hundreds. More than half of their churches had never been entered by an American teacher. They had indeed escaped the evils of pampering and superfluous aid, but substantial benefits of Christian light and training—full rations of the very bread of life, and full draughts of the water of life—were beyond their reach.

True, many of them could read, but what had they to read? They had learned to worship, to pray, to sing, but how well? Very partially had the love of God and the light of life supplanted the darkness of death.

Improved facilities for Christian education were what Mr. Beecher and his co-workers wanted. They felt that the secular education offered by an enlightened but, in religious matters, necessarily neutral government, could not lessen their obligation to aid in providing for the children of their converts the religious atmosphere and training of positively Christian schools of an advancing grade. To give over the brightest and most aspiring of their Christian youth to the moulding influence of irreligious, neutro-religious, or non-Christian mas-



ters and text-books, for eight or ten years, at the most plastic period of life, in the hope that they could subsequently in Sunday services and (for a few of them) in theological schools, renew that lost impress of early lessons, would certainly be a failure in Burma where the environment of thought and action have not been established by long years of Christian culture. (1883 Carpenter 289).

Mr. Beecher, and with him many of the Karen leaders, felt that it was their duty not merely to Christianize the Karens, but to bring converts forward as rapidly as possible to a high state of intellectual and religious culture which would enable them to go forward in their growth, independent of foreign aid. They proceeded to lay the foundations of Christian institutions, and to mould and develop the people for God, depending solely on the gifts of the poor and such local aid from foreign friends as might be offered.

**"Ko Tha Byu" Compound Secured.** A new compound was first selected—the present Sgaw Karen site—some distance out of Bassein. To Mrs. Beecher goes the credit for having selected such a beautiful location which, at the time, seemed to many others to be too far from town and roads, with too much danger from tigers and robbers. Ten acres were given by the government, and sixteen more purchased from various owners.

Clearing and building was begun at once, with a minimum of resources on hand. In America there was a depression during 1857 which made it very difficult to get money for mission work or buildings, and the American Civil War was to begin only four years later. But the first building of the new Bassein Sgaw Karen Normal and Industrial Institute was completed during 1858. During the rains, nearly all the pastors came in to study in the school. It was the first time they had ever had the whole Sgaw Karen Bible to study from, although Dr. Mason had completed the translation, and the New and Old Testaments had been printed by 1853. They found the study intensely interesting.

The Karens, especially Thra Kway, soon began speaking of an



English department of the school. The missionaries put them off as long as they could because of the lack of a teacher and the feeling of the Mission Board and some of the missionaries against the teaching of English. However, because the Karens were so determined, an English department was begun in 1860 with the help of San Tha and Sahnay.

As a beginning in the industrial emphasis of the school, all the pupils were required to work three hours a day. Ten of the vernacular students worked with carpenter, joiner, and wheelwright. From fifteen to twenty pounded and cleaned the rice for the school, using mills fitted up mainly by the students. These were considered a great improvement over the methods in common use. Six boys were given training in making bamboo and cane furniture. Sixteen women and girls studied sewing. The smaller boys were put to clearing and grading the school compound. Such was the beginning of the school which in later years became the example of what Burma schools ought to be.

**Burmese-Karen Cooperation.** In the Irrawaddy delta during the post-war years a warm understanding developed between the Burmans and Karens who had so recently been enemies. There are records of a Karen pastor starting a Burmese church, of a Burmese pastor starting a Karen church, of a Karen pastor examining and baptizing seven Chinese converts in a Burmese church, of at least three Shans who were won by the Burmese and Karen Christians, and of a joint meeting in 1864 of the Sgaw Karen and Burmese Associations. It is true that the Sgaw and Pwo churches formed their own separate Associations in 1863, but this was due not to unfriendly feelings but to a conviction that the work for the Pwos could be carried on more successfully if separated from the larger Sgaw group which had been associated with the Free Baptist Mission.

The missionaries, too, worked in close harmony although Mr. Beecher belonged to the Free Mission Society, and Messrs. Van Meter, Douglass, Thomas, and Crawley were under the American Baptist Missionary Union. To their cordial relationships, as well as to the fine spirit of the Karen and Burmese leaders, was due the reunion of the work on the Bassein field after

the death of Mr. Beecher on October 22, 1866.

Bassein statistics for 1866 at the close of Mr. Beecher's period of service indicate the progress of the three different language groups:

|                                | <i>Sgaw Karen</i> | <i>Pwo Karen</i> | <i>Burmese</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Baptisms                       | 209               | 74               | 9              | 292          |
| Churches                       | 52                | 17               | 3              | 72           |
| Communicants                   | 5,658             | 631              | 80             | 6,369        |
| Total Christian com-<br>munity | 10,745            | 1,241            | 140            | 12,126       |
| Pastors and preachers          | 83                | 28               | 6              | 117          |
| Schools                        | 40                | 12               | 2              | 54           |
| Scholars                       | 816               | 186              | 73             | 1,075        |
| Contributions                  | Rs. 17,549        | 3,117            | 283            | 20,953       |

The Bassein Sgaw Karens requested, and were granted, the services of Mr. Thomas of Henzada just as he was about to leave for America for health reasons in 1867. He accepted their invitation, tactfully consolidated the formerly separated groups, giving literally his last ounce of strength. He died June 8, 1868. The Burma Baptist Convention was informed of his successor while in session at Bassein in November 1868 by the first cable ever sent by the Mission Board in Boston to the Mission in Burma.<sup>1</sup> They assigned to Bassein Mr. C. H. Carpenter who for five and a half years had been connected with the Karen Seminary in Rangoon.

**Summary.** The years 1852 to 1868 saw the foundations well laid in the delta area. The devoted leaders of that period were not permitted to see the walls rise much above plinth level, but the foundations which they laid had the breadth and depth sufficient to bear the massive structures which were to be raised by Mr. Carpenter and others in the years ahead.

1. The following year saw the opening of the Suez Canal and the first trans-continental railway line in America. Communications with the field were rapidly improving.

## 20 To the Karen Heart-land

1853 - 1870

**S**AW Quala and Dr. Francis Mason down in Tavoy had long been interested in Toungoo, which, to the Karens, was the fountain from which they flowed out in historic times into Thailand, the delta of the Irrawaddy, and Tenasserim. They had other traditions which greatly ante-dated Toungoo, such as the *river of running sand* somewhere between China and Tibet, and a migration through a fearful and trackless desert, perhaps about 575 A.D., but all that was in the misty past. The Tavoy Karens had never seen Toungoo, but their traditions referred to it as the principal seat of their forefathers. (1856 Mason 385).

**Journey to Toungoo.** The city of Toungoo is located about 200 miles from the mouth of the Sittang River which empties into the sea between the Salween and the Irrawaddy. In 1837 Mr. Mason and Mr. Wade had attempted to visit Toungoo by going up the Salween and then into the Yunzalin which flowed in from the northwest. After twelve days progress in Burma Proper, they reached a point in a valley east of Shwegyin, but separated from that place by a high range of mountains. These they could have crossed through a pass had not the officials forbidden the villagers to supply the travellers with rice. Without a supply of food they had to turn back.

Dr. Mason wrote the Deputation in September 1853, saying that he considered Toungoo the most important Karen station in Burma, and asking permission to transfer to that place. Saw Quala, whose baptism as the second Karen convert has been recorded in chapter 10, and the pastor who had worked most



closely with Dr. Mason, was also eager to go to Toungoo. The Deputation gave its ready sanction but reminded Mr. Mason that, because of his poor health, he should not long delay his plans for a furlough in America. (1856 Mason 418).

Within two weeks of receiving this favourable reply, the Masons stepped into a large canoe with a Karen Bible and hymn book, and, turning its prow towards Toungoo, pushed off from Moulmein, this time following a different route from that of the earlier attempt.

From Martaban to Ava and the Himalayas, a range of mountains runs nearly north and south, forming a watershed between the Salween on the east and the Sittang and the Irrawaddy on the west. But between the Donthami Creek, a tributary of the Salween, and the Bilin River which flows into the Sittang, the granite had not been thrown up, with the result that there was a low pass in the range. During the rainy season this was flooded, forming a shallow lake covering the pass. It was this route that Mason determined to follow.

For fifteen miles they ascended the turbulent Salween, then entered the Donthami Creek which took them in behind Zingyaik, *Foot-of-God-Mountain* where Buddha was said to have left his footprint in the granite. Along the banks of the creek were charred house posts and ruined fruit trees of villages which had been burned during the recent Anglo-Burmese War. Further progress upstream brought them behind the mountain at the foot of whose western slope is the site of the ancient city of Thaton, capital of the Mon kingdom in the Third Century B.C. when Sona and Uttara, the first preachers of Buddhism, reached the coast. (1856 Mason 419).

On the Sabbath day the Masons rested beneath the outstretched branches of a banyan tree. There Mrs. Mason spread down their mats where they sat with their Karen and Burmese Bibles and hymn books and preached to passing boatloads of Burmans and Karens who pulled in to the shore to listen.

On Monday they entered an ancient canal and, after pulling between high banks for a few miles, emerged on a large lake extending further than eye could reach, with little knolls capped

with purple *Lagerstroemia* (Pyinma), and here and there patches of wild rice whose ripened heads were bending over the water.

The party left the lake at the western end by the outlet to the Bilin River. After crossing it they entered a second ancient canal which brought them to a second lake even larger than the first. In some places the canoe was paddled through beds of fragrant *Crinum*s with their lily-like flowers. In other places they found themselves entangled in the stems of the red and white water lilies. These were followed by a wilderness of the lotus whose flowers are considered particularly sacred by all Buddhists from Ceylon to Japan.

Water birds were no less abundant than the water plants. In some little coves they counted more than sixty pelicans seated together, with their bills stretched out half a yard long, a pouch under each like a priest's begging bowl. Cormorants, cranes, herons, and snake birds were all around in untold numbers. Then there were species of marabon, adjutants of great size, perching geese, ducks, teals, and shelldrakes.

The western boundary of this lake was only four or five miles from the banks of the Sittang into which it opened by a narrow outlet. There, at three miles distance, they could hear the bore coming up, roaring like the waves of the ocean shore when lashed by a storm. At the mouth of the river this tidal wave was sometimes twenty-seven feet high, engulfing everything before it.

The Masons found Sittang village to be very small, though the residence of a king six or seven centuries before. It stood on a ledge of laterite rock that rose from one to two hundred feet above the alluvial plain, terminating in a perpendicular bluff at the margin of the river.

They found the valley of the Sittang to be entirely at the mercy of armed robbers or *dacoits* who collected "taxes" from both travellers and villagers. As a matter of fact, the Masons' canoe was robbed at night of the two guns they carried for self-defense.

Further up this river the town of Shwegyin, meaning *gold-siftings*, offered them one of the most picturesque views from the river to be found in the east. It lies at the forks of the Toungoo and Shwegyin Rivers, with the mountains close behind as at Port



Louis and Capetown. Mason considered the town to be a very convenient location for a Karen mission station since Karen villages commenced a short distance from the town and continued at short intervals in untold numbers, south, east, and north. This place was soon to be occupied by Mr. Brayton and Mr. N. Harris as its first missionaries, and by Saw Dumoo as its first Christian Karen leader.

**Toungoo Town 110 Years Ago.** The river above Shwegyin is confined between steep banks all the way to Toungoo, with a strong current. After nineteen days of steady travel, the party spied the turreted walls of Toungoo looming up in a forest of palms, with its parapets pierced for bowmen. The city is a rectangle, a mile from north to south, and a mile and a half from east to west. It stands on a plain a quarter of a mile west of the river which was there about four hundred yards wide and deep enough for large boats at all seasons.

The walls were nineteen feet high and five feet thick, with five gates on each side from which run large streets across the city, crossing each other at right angles. Outside the walls and twenty feet from their base, was the small moat, and beyond this the large moat 207 feet wide.

*Toungoo in 1853 when the Masons arrived.*





The whole country from the Shan mountains on the east to the Prome mountains on the west was one immense paddy field, so that rice was abundant and cheap. Rice with fish from the streams, numerous vegetables such as yams, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, gourds, arrow roots, wild asparagus, tomatoes, okra, egg plant, spinach, and onions; with such fruits as plantains, jackfruits, papayas, mangoes, tamarinds, guavas, pineapples, oranges, limes, shaddocks, custard apples, and pomegranates constituted the principle food of the inhabitants. (1856 Mason 424).

When the Masons arrived in Toungoo, a large portion of the population had left the city owing to the disturbed state of the country. But it was said that there were about one thousand houses inside the walls and seven hundred in the suburbs, mostly occupied by Burmans. The Shans, Chins, Pa-os, and Karens were transient visitors.

**The Many Language-groups in Burma.** Although there are some one hundred and twenty-five different language-groups in Burma, they are not a mixed people. Each group usually has its own location. The Burmese occupy the towns and villages on tidal waters and the principle thoroughfares, except in some parts of Pegu and Moulmein districts where the Mons originally possessed that position and, in many instances, still retain it. Behind these are the Pwo Karens, while on the Mountains and in the valleys beyond them are the Sgaw Karens. This is the usual distribution till entering Toungoo district where, on the east, the Pwos and Sgaws are replaced by an entirely new series of Karen tribes.

A tribe of people that called themselves Pa-o, but who were called *Taungthus* or Mountaineers by the Burmese, seemed to occupy the position that the Pwos had in Moulmein and Martaban. They dress in dark blue pants and jackets like the Shans and Chinese, but their language shows their relationship to the Pwo Karens with whose language about half their root words are in common. They are a nation of farmers and pedlers and may be met with their wares all over Burma, but there seemed to be none of their villages near Toungoo.

The mountains of the western boundary of Toungoo, which divide that district from Prome, are peopled by the Sgaws who are extensively engaged in raising silk worms which feed on the leaves of the castor oil plant, the jujube, the myrobalan, the bo tree, and the mango. The southeast part of the district is peopled with a tribe of Karens who call themselves *Mophgas* (*Mauniepghas*). They are closely related to the Sgaws though the dialect they speak also contains a few Pwo idioms. Parties from many of their villages visited the Masons and all seemed anxious to receive the truth. Saw Quala, who joined the Masons in December, finally made his home among them and baptized hundreds.

North of the Mopghas are Pakus, a tribe distinguished from them in dress, name, and slightly in dialect. Great numbers visited the missionaries, professed faith in Christ, and asked for a teacher in their villages.

Thauk-ye-khat (Drinking Water) Creek, which flows into the Sittang a short distance below Toungoo, is the northern limit of the Pakus and Mopghas. All the Karens north of this stream are the Bwes (Bgais), a tribe widely different from those with which Mason and Quala had been acquainted, and about which the Tenasserim Karens had little information. But when they crowded into the Toungoo mission house, their traditions which they repeated showed them to be true Karens; their language showed them to be more widely separated from the Pwos and Sgaws than these two groups are from each other.

The Bwes were divided into three sub-tribes. Of these the Bwe-pho (or Little Bwes) live in the valleys and on the lower spurs of the mountains east of Toungoo. On the summit and sides of the great range to the east are Bwe-gohta whom the Burmans call the wild Karens. Their villages had bamboo barricades built around them and no stranger could enter without an introduction from one of the villages. When received into their homes, a place was pointed out for the visitor to occupy, and he was not to leave that place under any consideration, without the express permission of the host. If he did, he was speared to death on the spot. If any man entered their settlements without the protection of one of their own number, he



was treated as an enemy and a spy. Death or slavery was the consequence of his temerity.

Yet these same "wild Karens", when venturing into Toungoo to buy salt, stayed to listen to the gospel. Several groups made urgent appeals for a Christian teacher for their villages, and when the lack of trained men made it impossible to meet their request, they appealed to the government to permit them to move closer to Toungoo where they might hear about the Eternal God from the teachers.

**Saw Quala, Faithful Leader.** Major Arthur Phayre wanted to appoint a man through whom the hill people could communicate with the government. For this service he was willing to pay twenty-five or thirty rupees per month—about five times the mission salary. He wanted Saw Quala to be the man, but he refused, saying, "Sir, I will not do it. I will not have the money. I will not mix up God's work with government work. There are others to do this; employ them... Were I to take your money, the wild Karens would turn against me." (1856 Mason 555).

Of Saw Quala Dr. Mason made this statement: "The missionaries and the Board of the Missionary Union are amply repaid for all their expenditure and labours, if they had done nothing more than to raise up such a man as Saw Quala. But he is not alone; he is one of many. The seeds of truth have taken deep root throughout the length and breadth of the land—from Mergui and Tavoy, Ye, and Moulmein—from Martaban to Sittang, Shwegyin, and Toungoo—from Rangoon to Danubyu, Henzada, and Prome—from Bassein to Sandoway, Ramree, and Akyab; in the Burman cities, the Mon villages, the Pa-o hamlets, the Chin huts, the Shan zayats; on the Salong isles, the Pwo plains, in the Mopgha palm groves, and Paku valleys; on the Sgaw hills and Bwe mountains. To stop their development is to stop the spring from budding, the flowers from opening their petals, the trees from bending with their ripened fruits."

Unfortunately Dr. Mason's health was so poor that in January 1854 he and his wife had to return to America, leaving Saw Quala in charge of the new Toungoo field. Saw Quala chose three



Karen associates: Saw Pepaw he placed among the Sgaws, Saw Shapaw among the Bwes, Saw Pwaipaw among the Pakus, while he himself took the responsibility for the Mopghas. He reported: "Because God worked with us, and enlightened the hearts of the sons of the streams, and the sons of the forests, people have become Christians and received baptism at my hands, at one place after another, and in rapid succession. Still, those who first sowed the seed were Teacher Mason and Mama Mason; for all the people of Toungoo whom I have baptized, appear to have gone and seen and heard at the presence of the teacher and teacheress, and they ceased drinking spirits and offering to demons immediately. When I questioned them before baptism, they believed on the very first announcement of the gospel from the teacher and teacheress."

In the first two years of Saw Quala's work, twenty-eight churches were established and 1880 persons baptized. Quala wrote: "I dare not rest, neither in the rains nor in the hot season. God has shown me my work and I stop not. I go hither and thither, up the mountains, down into the valley, one night in a place, two nights in a place, continually. Still, I know that I do the work of God imperfectly, and my heart is exceedingly sad. Some come to me from a distance and reprove me, saying, "Teacher, thou sayest thou comest to exhort men, and thou hast never been to our streams, to our lands. Dost thou not love us?" Then I feel unable to open my mouth, for I know when the judgment day arrives, many that know not God will charge sin upon me, and I can only stammer...I desire that the kingdom of God may be established among these ruffian slayers of men, and all over the land of Toungoo, far beyond what I can express, because God has given evidence that he proposes to save them. My flesh is weak, but my heart is strong. Brethren, teachers, and teacheresses, pray for me!"

During part of the time that the Masons were away, Mr. Whitaker was transferred from Moulmein to help Saw Quala, but he lived for only a year. When the Masons returned in 1857 very much improved in health, Mr. Mason looked out from a high mountain ridge and saw everywhere the new Christian

villages which had sprung up in his absence. He wrote: "When I stand on these mountain tops in Christian villages, and see now two, anon three, and then five other clusters of Christian habitations, I feel like the Queen of Sheba—'The half has not been told.' I could not convey to a congregation in America an adequate conception that would be credited, of the magnitude of the work effected. Were the Union to become bankrupt, and all the missionaries to return home, the work would go on without our aid as certainly as the dawn increases to perfect day." (1945 St. John 226, 1856 Mason 105).

**Discovering God's Plan.** Mason believed that if the Christian worker could only discover God's plan and follow it in his work, that success was bound to follow. For to him, God did have a plan: just as he made a single acorn and wrapped up within it all future trees down to the end of time, so he works on the same general principles in the kingdom of the spirit. In that realm he works not through inorganic matter but through intelligent men whose duty is not to devise plans of their own, but to discover God's plans and follow them.

The analogy of nature teaches us that, if we follow God's plans, we should endeavour to make mission churches self-supporting and self-propagating. The number of individuals baptized is no criterion whatever of the success of a mission. One small church, able to conduct understandingly all its own affairs, to support its ministry, and to feel its responsibility to give the gospel to others to the extent of its ability, marks greater progress than a hundred feeble churches which have to be taught everything by the missionaries. The one is a man; the other, a dependent family of helpless children.

Neither Quala nor his associates, nor the village teachers he employed, called on the Mission for any funds, though he was authorized to draw a small stipend for himself and the other preachers. He said that the churches and the congregations had met all their needs. Only for their families, from whom they had to be separated, was some mission support given.

Just as the history of the Tavoy Mission had been the history of Saw Quala from his baptism in 1830 to his departure for



Toungoo in 1833, so, too, the history of the Toungoo Mission was his history, for, from its foundation, he was its moving spirit, evolving it into being. No single individual, missionary or national, contributed so much as he did to build it up. (1856 Mason 552).

**Mrs. Mason Persuades Chiefs to Start Girls' School.** Mrs. Mason was a woman who showed an unusual capacity for leadership. During her first few months in Toungoo she started a normal school for the training of village teachers, raising the necessary funds from English residents. Many of the pupils later became workers in all parts of the hills.

After her return from America, she was responsible for starting education for girls, a very new idea to the Karen villagers. In order to get the backing of the chiefs for this revolutionary step, she told them that they would have the honour before all nations, of educating their women like the English people, and the privilege of vindicating their own character before the world. They should have the honour of supporting the school themselves, in an institution of their own, on land of their own. Only the government would help them in the beginning, and it would be pleasing to the great God whom they had determined to follow. (1945 St. John 230).

The plan of the undertaking struck them favourably, but the idea of making it a girls' school was by no means popular for a long time. When the chiefs did take hold, it was with enthusiasm. More than two hundred villagers came to cut timber and construct the buildings. The Karen Education Society was organized to take charge of the Female Institute for all tribes. This Society included some two hundred and sixty chiefs from six different tribes.

**Mrs. Mason's Mental Derangement.** Unfortunately, this capable woman was taken with a mental illness in 1863. She imagined that there had been revealed to her a new language, written in the designs of carpet, skirt, and bag, in the lines of the human face, in the symbols of the Buddhist religion, and in almost every object in nature—a language which men needed only to learn to become Christians. All this was most confusing to a



people newly coming out of animism who had the highest respect for the person involved. A missionary committee appealed to Mr. Mason to correct the strange teachings of his wife, but for some time he was either unable or unwilling to do so. (1945 St. John 234).

In 1861 Rev. E. B. Cross, after having spent fifteen years among the Karens of Tenasserim, was shifted to Toungoo. He was called upon to play a very difficult part as he tried to steady the churches during the troubled days of Mrs. Mason's illness, and to keep up a training school for teachers. By 1866 or 67 when Rev. A. Bunker joined the mission, the churches were coming into the light again. Then in 1870 the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention held its annual meeting in Toungoo. Dr. Mason participated in these meetings, for he had at last realized that he had made a great mistake. He used all his influence to heal the divisions caused by his wife's teaching. The Missionary Union reappointed him without delay, but Mrs. Mason still continued her teaching and invited another denomination of Christians to enter and take the leadership of the churches that remained faithful to her.

**Conclusion.** In spite of the seven years of uncertainty and division, the churches of Toungoo District made a remarkable growth. What greater progress would have been made had not the mental illness afflicted Mrs. Mason, we cannot know. Certain it was that this period was difficult for all missionary and national leaders concerned. But in spite of the trouble, the church was well established at the half-way point between Rangoon and Mandalay, a location which had within easy reach, all the language groups of the Karen and Shan mountains to the east. The gospel had been brought to the Karen heart-land.

## 21 Upriver to Prome and Mandalay

1854 - 1900

**T**HE Board Deputation at the 1853 Convention in Moulmein appointed the Kincaids and Simons to work at Prome while waiting for permission to settle in the capital, for Prome—or Pye as it is called in Burmese—was a central point of approach to the Burmese nation from which the new teaching could radiate. Mr. Simons was a missionary with twenty years experience in Burma. Mr. Kincaid had served even longer and was probably the most daring of the pioneer missionaries. His work had begun in Arakan after which he made several trips to the capital, residing in Ava from 1833 to 1837 when King Tharrawaddy was on the throne. (See pp 104, 105). In 1837 he travelled to the far north of Burma, taking risks and enduring hardships that few could endure.

Then in 1851 the Kincaids and Dawsons had settled in Rangoon with the patronage of the king. (See p. 138) After the fighting was over in 1852, these two families were quickly at work again in Rangoon. (See p. 150)

**Kincaids and Simons Posted to Prome.** Just as soon as conditions in Rangoon permitted Mr. Kincaid to be spared, he moved up the river to Prome in January 1854. No missionary had worked there since Dr. Judson's visit twenty-four years earlier. (See p. 81 ff.) Mr. Simons and his family joined the Kincaids a month later. (1945 St. John 360).

Mr. Kincaid took the responsibility for jungle touring for which his vigorous constitution was especially fitted. He found it comparatively easy to visit the towns along the Irrawaddy in a boat, but many of the villages were situated away from the river

in the hills where even a horse found difficulty in negotiating the trails. In his touring work Mr. Kincaid often had no bed but his cloak and no pillow but his saddle. Mr. Simons could not stand such exposure, so he took the responsibility for school and evangelistic work in the town.

**Prome Church Organized.** The first church in Prome was organized on February 22, 1854, shortly after Mr. Kincaid's arrival, at which time the first three converts were baptized. By July the number had increased to thirty-eight, and there were many inquirers both in Prome and the neighbouring towns and villages. By the end of the year the number had grown to seventy, a large proportion of whom were highly gifted men and women. Twenty-one of them were Karens. U Kon was appointed as the first Burmese pastor of the church.

The members of the church soon became very much interested in sharing their new faith with all who would listen. Often during their church services, there would be nearly a hundred passers-by who listened all around the outside of the chapel. After the regular service closed, the worshippers usually remained and invited those outside to come in. The disciples scattered themselves among the visitors and, collecting in little groups of five to ten, began in a conversational way, to lay before them the claims of Christ. All engaged in conversation, and great interest developed. Sometimes a reference was made to the Scriptures when the large pulpit Bible was taken from the bamboo stand and placed on the mat floor where it was read, passage after passage, by the Burmese assistants, and explained in the hearing of all. (1855 Annual Report).

An illustration of an unusual method of spreading the gospel is recorded from the Prome field. A village headman was ill and sent for a Burmese doctor who gave him powders wrapped in small pieces of paper. The wrapping papers were bits of New Testament which he read eagerly and then went back to the doctor for more. He had never seen a missionary or Christian pastor, yet these fragments won him to the living God to whom he prayed for six years before he got in touch with the church.



**Hot Season Fires Destroy Church Building.** When in 1855 some 150 to 200 people attended the church services, the members felt the need of replacing their bamboo zayat with a good teak chapel. The members and friendly English officers contributed liberally for the purpose, and some good timber was secured from an old monastery which was given by its owner. The need for the new place of worship was made more urgent when a disastrous hot season fire destroyed nearly the whole town, including the Christian zayat. Actual building of the new structure did not begin until 1861. Mr. Kincaid then supervised the construction of a substantial teak chapel, 36 by 50 feet, which cost over Rs. 1000. The new building had been in use less than a year when another hot season fire swept through the quarter, destroying 5000 houses and the church building.

This time the government required that all buildings in town be built of brick in order to reduce the fire hazard. Because the American Civil War was being fought at the time, no building appropriations were available from abroad, but again the church members and foreign friends in Prome, Rangoon, and Moulmein contributed the Rs. 10,626 which was required.

Helping the missionaries were a number of Burmese associates including Saya En, Saya Phu, Saya Yan Gin, Saya Shwe Po, Ko Dway, Ko Kong, Maung Pau-te, Maung Mya Pu, Maung Shwe Tha, and Maung Youk. Some of these helped with a school for children of Christian families, while others visited villages in the district. Four Karen evangelists were supported by the Bassein Karen Home Mission Society. (See p. 175).

**Visit to Amarapura.** Mr. Kincaid and Dr. Dawson, accompanied by Saya En and Maung Pau-te, in March 1855 went upriver to the capital which was then located at Amarapura. A year earlier when the king had sent an embassy to Calcutta, its members had called at the Baptist Mission in Rangoon to assure the missionaries that there would be no danger in proceeding to "the golden city", and that the king would be glad to welcome them. It was on this invitation that Mr. Kincaid and Dr. Dawson proposed to visit the capital. They wanted to be there when Chinese and Shan caravans would be in Amarapura so that they could

send tracts and books with them to their far away homes.

Several members of the Ava church still remained in that city, and two visitors from Ava had recently been baptized in Prome. Other Burmese Christians were scattered through the town and villages along the Irrawaddy. It was Kincaid's plan to visit all and to preach to the thousands who, twenty years before, had heard the gospel from his lips.

Amarapura was situated a short distance above Ava, with a population of some 300,000 people. It was a beautiful city. The streets were broad and clean, some of them five or six miles long. On the north side of the city was a lake in which the groves of coconut, tamarind, and mango trees were reflected.

Soon after arriving, Saya En and Maung Pau-te started out to locate any surviving members of the little church which was formerly in Ava. When they found Ko Shwe Ni, no language could express the feeling excited both in him and his teacher at this reunion. During the past seventeen long years this man had stood firm amid trials and struggles; his faith and hope as a Christian had remained unshaken. He had also won his brother-in-law to faith in Christ.

**King Mindon is Friendly.** Within a few days the missionaries were called to the palace, a beautiful teak wood structure in the form of a cross, with a towering spire some two hundred feet high over the throne room. All was carved, lacquered, and gilded in a manner to make it an exceedingly imposing structure.

The first interview of the missionaries was with two of the *Atwinwuns* or privy councillors who, after getting information about the visitors, arranged for an interview with the king. Mindon, then forty-one years old, had a pleasing face, expressive of a thoughtful mind, cheerful temper, and kindly heart. The visitors were introduced as American *sayas* or teachers, one of whom had some knowledge of medicine.

To the king's query as to the purpose of their visit, they replied that they had come to present their respects to the king and to get his authority to move to the capital some time in the future with their families. There they hoped to instruct the people, to have a school for children, and to open a medical dispensary for



the sick and suffering.

After a period of questioning about America, its government and international relationships, the king asked if they would be willing, should he desire it, to go to America on business for him. They replied that they would of course go, though they hoped the king would have no reason for such a step.

King Mindon stated that he wished to encourage trade and requested them to publicize the fact in America. He said he would afford American merchants every opportunity if they would come and settle in his kingdom. Mr. Kincaid promised to send him regularly the *New York Weekly Tribune* so that he might have direct information about the West. (See p. 140).

Before departing, the missionaries made the king a gift of a number of Burmese books including the *Historical Instructor*, Mr. Stilson's *Arithmetic*, a *Geometry*, *Human Anatomy*, and the *Bible* richly bound. Speaking about books, the king advised the missionaries to give no tracts or books to the Burmese as it would, he thought, be wasted labour. The king continued that there were so many books that no man could read them all, and that not one in fifteen thousand could comprehend half of what he read. His grand uncle, who was the most learned man in the empire, the celebrated Mekara Prince, had read all the Burmese sacred books but one. Though a most devoted scholar, even he could not accomplish so great a task. (1858 Patton 274).

At the end of the audience the king told them, "If you have any feelings of regard for me, come soon, come soon; and I will pay all your expenses." The visitors then returned to their homes in Prome and Rangoon, happy that they were welcome in the capital and that there was no hindrance to carrying on the Christian work there. This was quite a change from the situation which Judson and Colman had found back in 1820 when they had first visited the capital. (See chapter 4.)

**Second Visit to the Capital.** Late in 1855 Mr. Kincaid received repeated messages from the court offering boats and men to take him and his family upriver, and to furnish him with a house. In response to this invitation, Messrs. Kincaid and Dawson, accompanied by their families, again left Prome on January



24, 1856. The king received them in the most friendly manner and strongly urged them to settle in the royal city. (1858 Patton 264.)

**A Letter to America from the King.** The king's brother was anxious to send ten young men to America to study engineering, but this plan fell through. However, the king asked Mr. Kincaid to take a letter for him to the president. After some hesitation, Mr. Kincaid consented to the arrangement; a royal letter was at once drafted and given to Mr. Kincaid to carry to Washington.

In taking their leave of the court, the missionaries were each presented with a man's skirt called *pa-so*, a ring, and a drinking cup as marks of his Majesty's personal favour. Mrs. Kincaid and Mrs. Dawson and the children were introduced to the queen and ladies at the palace by whom they were received most cordially. They gave a copy of the Burmese Bible to her Majesty, which was graciously accepted.

While in the capital, Dr. Dawson, like his predecessor, Dr. Price, treated many cases of cataract and other diseases, some of his patients coming from the highest circles. At that time, too, a serious earthquake occurred lasting several days, seriously damaging brick buildings and pagodas. The king, himself, organized relief for the thousands who had been made homeless. Dr. Dawson was able to help treat the injured.

Before the missionary group left the capital, four persons had been baptized, bringing the total number of disciples to eight. U Shwe Ni was ordained as the pastor of the little church.

Having consented to further the king's wishes with reference to the opening of friendly and commercial intercourse with the United States, Mr. Kincaid made his arrangements for a hasty trip to Washington where he delivered into the hands of the president the royal letter which had been intrusted to him. (1853 Missionary Magazine 375).

This letter read in part: "His Majesty is aware that it has always been the custom of great rulers to be on terms of friendship with other nations, and to pursue measures tending to perpetual amity...Should this royal kingdom and the great country of America form a friendly intercourse, there is on our

part the desire that the two great countries, through all coming generations, may cultivate friendly relations, and that the merchants and common people and all classes may be greatly benefitted. For this purpose this royal letter is committed to Mr. Kincaid. Should he be charged with a letter from the president to the royal city of Ava, for his Majesty and the court, and should the president and great officers say, 'Let the two countries be on terms of friendship, so that our children and great grandchildren, and all the merchants and common people, may through all generations reap great advantage'—should such a message come, it will be heard with great pleasure."

The president sent an appreciative reply to the king, together with a valuable collection of books and a model steam locomotive. Though little trade developed as the result of the deputation, yet it can be said that from that time onward Burma and the United States have had the most cordial relations. (1858 Patton 278; 1956 Maung Maung 50).

**Staff Shortage Prevents Opening Work in Capital.** The door was now open for Mr. Kincaid to settle in the capital, but he felt that he ought not to leave Prome until some other missionary could be sent there who was strong enough to do the district touring which Mr. Simons could not do. Also, the Missionary Union was so short of funds in the years immediately preceding the American Civil War that the money needed to begin the work at Amarapura was not available. Added to this was the fact that the king was preparing a new capital at Mandalay to which new site everything would be shifted in 1860. Therefore, the Kincaids settled down at Prome.

Mr. Kincaid's touring now took him every month or six weeks to Thayetmyo, or Mango Town, up the river and on the opposite bank from Prome. This place was the frontier cantonment town only a few miles from the border between the British and Burmese sections of the country. There a number of Christian army officers gave generously toward the cost of building a church and the support of two Burmese evangelists. By 1855 there were thirteen Burmese members of the church in Thayetmyo. (1856 Missionary Magazine 179).



**Contacts with Asho Chins.** In Prome District, extending a hundred miles along the banks of the Irrawaddy River, the population was predominantly Burmese but with some Karen villages to the south and east. Away from the river were villages of *Kyens*, or as we would call them today, Asho or Southern Chins. Mr. Kincaid had already become acquainted with these people in northern Arakan (See p. 107.), but in that earlier day they had not readily responded to the new teaching. Now in the regions along the Irrawaddy, the Kincaids and Karen Home Missionaries from Bassein made renewed contacts with them.

During the rains of 1861 two small schools were opened in Asho Chin villages, one taught by a man and the other by a woman. The pupils numbered only twenty-three, but it was a beginning: never before had there been a school in a Chin village. In Prome nearly half the students in Mrs. Kincaid's Burmese school were Chins. (1862 Annual Report 78).

**Karen Home Missionaries at Work.** Two of the four Sgaw Karen home missionaries in the Prome District in 1859 were Thra Shwe Baw and Thra Myat Koung. They worked among the Karens and Chins, teaching and preaching. Of these men Mr. Kincaid wrote in 1863: "These preachers are first class young men and have been remarkably well instructed in the Scriptures. To Mr. Beecher and the Bassein churches I am under great obligations for such faithful and well-trained fellow laborers—men who are not eye-servants and do not need promptings to go into the field." (1883 Carpenter 299,314).

Rev. and Mrs. B.C. Thomas of Henzada were also deeply interested in the Asho Chins of their district. In 1863 Mr. Thomas and a Chin evangelist, Ko Tha Gyi, made the difficult trip over the western Arakan Mountains to visit the Chins on the west coast. Later, Mrs. Thomas and her son, W. F. Thomas, undertook work for the Chins following her husband's death.

In 1863, Maung Coopany, a home missionary of the Bassein Pwo Karen Association, was engaged in reducing the Asho Chin language to writing, using the Pwo Karen alphabet as the basis. He produced a spelling book and a small hymn book in that language which were printed by Mr. Bennett of the Mission Press



in Rangoon. So far as can be discovered, he made no use of the earlier work of Mr. Stilson who was reported to have reduced the Asho Chin language to writing back in 1841-42. (See p. 109.)

In November 1865 Maung Coopany was adopted as an evangelist of the newly formed Burma Baptist Missionary Convention to work among the Asho Chins. At the first annual meeting of that Convention in 1866 he reported that twenty Chins had been baptized. The Convention asked Dr. Wade to work with Maung Coopany and some of the Chin leaders to improve the work that had been done on the language, but evidently this help was never given, for Mr. Carson wrote in 1888, "We find the alphabet given the Chins...so imperfect that it is yet an open question whether we should use it or discard it. We are not all sure that it will not be best to reach them, as to educational work, entirely by the medium of the Burmese." (1866 Annual Report BBMC 12, 20; 1945 St. John 515).

**The Carsons and the Zomi Chins.** Although Thayetmyo had been opened as a Burmese mission station, yet after Rev. and Mrs. Arthur E. Carson were appointed the first missionaries for the Chins in 1886, that town was selected as the most promising location for Chin work in the British-held area. Ever since 1888 Thayetmyo has been known primarily as a centre for the Asho Chin churches.

In those early days very little was known of the Zomi Chins of the Northern Chin Hills. It was generally supposed that they were all one people with only slight differences in dialect and culture. It was not till the Carsons were shifted to Haka after their first term in Thayetmyo that it was realized that about all the two peoples had in common was the name *Chin*, given by the Burmese, and meaning wild or uncivilized. In this northern frontier area the Carsons began work in 1900. Sixty-two years later the Zomi churches rank third only to the Sgaw Karens in church membership with over 36,000 communicants. The Asho Chins, on the other hand, have a membership of less than one-tenth that number.

**Conclusion.** Mr. Simons gives the following figure for the baptisms in the Prome Mission during the years 1854 to 1867: 348 Burmese, Karens, Chins, Shans, and Chinese; 48 English; 7 Indians or Anglo-Indians; and 1 American, making a total of 401 persons baptized.

The Prome Mission was a good example of Christian work in a definitely Burmese section of the country. It showed that the gospel, presented with intelligence and energy to the Burmese population, could appeal to the Burmese mind and heart. The mission was important for its contacts with the Burmese court and the friendly relations that were established. It was important, too, for developing and fostering new missions among both the Asho and Zomi Chin language groups.

*(For the further development of the church among the Asho Chins, see chapter 35; among the Zomi Chins, chapter 38.)*

## 22 Northeastward to China

1860-1880

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**A**LONG India's northern border run the giant ranges of the snowy Himalayas, but just to the east of Assam at India's north-eastern corner, these mighty ranges turn sharply to the south and continue with decreasing height across Southeast Asia. Even the Malay Peninsula and the islands of the East Indies appear to be continuations of these southward branches of the towering ranges of Central Asia. (1957 Dickason 7).

Burma lies directly in the path of these north-south mountain chains. The westernmost complex of parallel ranges runs down through the regions occupied by the Zomi and Asho Chins referred to in the last chapter. The region between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers in the north, and between the Irrawaddy and the Sittang south of Mandalay are the homeland of the Burmese people. To the east of the Irrawaddy in the north, and of the Sittang further south, lie the mountain highlands of the Kachin and Shan States which are slashed down their middle by the gorge and rapids of the Salween River which loses its violence and flows peacefully into the sea below Moulmein. (See chapter 9). It is to this eastern mountainous region that we now turn our attention.

**Burma's Many Language-groups.** Burma's twenty million people are mostly of Mongolian stock who have probably migrated from the bleak highlands of Tibet and Central Asia during the past 2000 years into Burma's mountains and valleys where they found a more kindly climate and easier life. They brought with them at least 125 different languages and dialects, with distinct customs and costumes. (1950 Luce 126 ff.) Among those set-



ting in the eastern mountains are the Shans, the Lahus, the Was, the Lisus, the Akhas, the Pa-os, the Palaungs, and the Karens of various types. Of these the Shans, the Pa-os, and the Palaungs are largely Buddhist in faith, while most of the others are spirit-worshippers.

Even in the middle of the Twentieth Century these different people have still not intermingled to any great extent but live in separate villages, like patches of wild flowers in a spring woods of the temperate zone—here a clump of bloodroot, there of May-apples, and beyond a bed of violets, with arbutus near the crest of the ridge.

Once in five days these people come together when they carry their produce, suspended from tump-line or shoulder pole, to the fifth-day bazaar held in the central town or village of the area. The welding together of groups of such ethnic and linguistic diversity is one of Burma's most difficult problems. The process of cohesion will advance more rapidly as the knowledge of Burmese extends into these mountainous regions. The present policy of using Burmese as the medium of instruction in schools will carry Burmese into every district.

Baptist missionaries had first met the Pa-o people in the region north of Moulmein, and Shans were occasionally encountered in Lower Burma where a few had been won for Christ. When the Kincaids lived in Ava, they saw many Shan caravans bringing their wares to the capital. In 1837 when Mr. Kincaid tried unsuccessfully to go overland to Assam via the Hukaung Valley, he had met both Shans and Kachins.

**Toungoo as Gateway to Shan Country.** It was not until the Masons and Saw Quala began mission work in Toungoo (see chapter 20), that there was a Christian centre at all close to the western border of Shanland. A few miles to the east of Toungoo is the escarpment which marks the edge of the Karen Hills and the much dissected Shan plateau, with elevations from 2,500 to 8,000 feet. The frost line, which lies roughly at the 3,500 foot contour, divides the tropical wild bananas, palms, and teak from the temperate oaks, chestnuts, magnolias, and pines. Dozens of kinds of bamboos and orchids flourish both below and

above the frost line. In some areas the mountain forests give way to high, rolling grasslands.

**First Missionaries for the Shans.** Rev. and Mrs. Moses H. Bixby, who had worked in Moulmein with the Burmese and Mon churches from 1853 to 1856, were forced to return to America because of Mrs. Bixby's health. They were re-appointed in 1860 to become the first missionaries to the Shans. About the time they arrived in Rangoon during the hot season of 1861, some 10,000 Shans were reported to have migrated from their homes to the British-held area. The British commissioner, Colonel Phayre, gave them land and invited them to settle seven miles from Toungoo. (1865 Missionary Jubilee 213,239).

The arrival of the 10,000 Shan refugees at the same time as the first missionaries ever assigned to Shan work seemed truly providential. God seemed to have sent the Shans to the mission, as well as the mission to the Shans. Mr. and Mrs. Bixby did not have to penetrate robber-infested mountainous country, but settled in Toungoo with their Shan parish at their very door. They were able to give counsel to the struggling new settlement, help those who had lost everything along the way, and encourage the Shans to build schools and chapels. (1862 Annual Report 53-59).

Although the Bixbys and many of the Shans could speak Burmese, the missionaries felt that they must learn Shan if they were to be able to tour in Shan country and communicate with the villagers far from Burmese influence. So they spent part of each day studying the Shan language which is closely related to the Thai or Siamese. The rest of the day Mr. Bixby spent in studying Burmese and in preaching to both Shans and Burmese in the *zayat*, in their homes, along the wayside—wherever people were willing to listen.

A little later Mr. Bixby wrote of the serious epidemics of small-pox and fever which killed from five to seven hundred Shans, sometimes six or seven out of a family of ten. So great was the mortality in the new settlement that the Deputy Commissioner had to move the Shans to a site nearer Toungoo.

**First Shan Christian in Toungoo.** Mr. Bixby got a plot of land near the bazaar, borrowed money, and built a teakwood

chapel in which regular worship was begun in May 1862. The first Shan convert was Maung Aung Myat, the son of a *sawbwa* or chief; he was baptized in September 1862, and four months later two Shan women were baptized. By the end of 1863 the Shan-Burmese Church had forty-one communicants from various language-groups. At one time it had as many as ten different languages represented in its membership.

The year 1863 was a busy one for the Bixbys and the four associates who worked with them. Mrs. Bixby began a school for children with fifty pupils; Mr. Bixby started a theological class with ten students who were planning to become pastors and teachers. In addition to the church and school work, the missionaries translated four tracts into Shan and prepared a spelling book and vocabulary. Since new type had to be designed and cut, the actual printing was delayed for another two years. (1865 Missionary Jubilee 214).

**First Attempt to Penetrate Shan Country.** Christian activities included a preaching tour down the Sittang River as far as Shwegyin, but roving bands of armed robbers made it impossible for them to enter real Shan country. They did try an expedition to the east in the dry season of 1864 but were turned out of the usual Shan caravan route by an insurrection which led to the blockading of all trails. They tried to get around the road-blocks through the dense jungle, but were forced to return after reaching Mo-bye on the western border of the Shan States. (1865 Annual Report 37).

They did manage to make many contacts with the *Gecko* Karen villages in the country through which they tried to detour. From that time onward the Gecko chiefs were eager to get teachers and hear the Christian message. So, though the expedition was a failure so far as visiting Shanland was concerned, it was successful in establishing Christian out-stations all the way from Tonngoo to the Shan border. During Mr. Bixby's six years of service in Toungoo, he spent about one-sixth of his time in jungle touring and preaching, largely over this 80-mile stretch of mountainous country between Toungoo and Mo-bye. (1912 St. John 42).



**What Language to Use?** As the Shan-Burmese Church in Toungoo grew with its diversified membership, Mr. Bixby faced the problem of what languages to use in the preparation of Christian tracts and books. Should it be Burmese largely? Favouring an affirmative answer to this question were the following facts.

First, Burmese was the language of the country; all races, tribes, and clans spoke more or less of it, and its use was becoming more wide-spread every year. This could not be said for any other language. (1865 Annual Report 38).

Second, it was utterly impracticable, if not impossible, to reduce to writing the dialects of all the mountain groups, twenty-four of which Mr. Bixby knew about in the area of work assigned to him. When could the work of translating the Bible into so many languages ever be completed? It would be of great convenience to have a single language in which all could meet. If any exception were to be made, it would be for the Shan which was already a written language and was used extensively even beyond the borders of the Shan States.

Because of Mr. Bixby's desire to use Burmese as much as possible, he prepared relatively little Shan Christian literature. But, though he was convinced of the importance of Burmese as a common language, he believed that preachers and teachers of every people should come mainly from themselves. The great work of foreign teachers should be to call into the field and guide the work of men who have sprung up from their own flocks. The Burmese should have Burmese, the Shans should have Shans, and the Karens should have Karens as their teachers; but it did not follow that they should keep up their separate languages. To secure such leaders, Mr. Bixby gave much time to the theological class in which, in 1864, there were six Shan students, six Burmese, and fourteen mountaineers preparing to be preachers and teachers.

**Financing the Mission.** To meet the costs involved in developing a new mission was no easy problem when there were no established churches on which to depend for support. Mr. Bixby relied largely on specific donations—i.e., special personal

gifts for a specific use from churches and friends—for they enabled him to meet the growing needs of the mission. They almost doubled the practical work and efficiency of his programme. Whenever he considered a call to be from God, he did not wait to count his money, but moved forward. He testified that the money never failed to come in: "When the Lord creates a demand, I know He has a supply not far off to meet it. God's promise is better than the best paper." By the end of 1864 the one church had increased to three, and the membership to ninety-six.

**The Cushings, New Recruits in Shan Work.** In the autumn of 1866 Rev. and Mrs. Josiah Cushing sailed for Burma, being designated to the Shan Mission. Before they arrived, Mr. Bixby had secured passes, duly stamped and sealed, from the kings of Burma and Siam permitting him to pass in safety through their respective dominions in the Shan States. But as it turned out, others were to make the first long trip into the Shan country.

**First Successful Tour in Shan Country.** At the second annual meeting of the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention in Moulmein in November 1867, it was decided that Mr. Rose of the Burmese Mission and the newly arrived Mr. Cushing should explore the Shan States, going east from Mandalay. If Mr. Cushing was to produce Shan literature, it was essential for him to get an idea of the variations in the language and discover where the best Shan was spoken in order that he might learn the purest dialect. (1868 Annual Report 35).

Messrs. Rose and Cushing left Rangoon for Mandalay by steamer near the end of November. A fellow passenger was the George Hough who had come to Burma in 1816 as the first mission printer and who had later served the government in the education department. When they arrived in Mandalay they spent some time studying the regions through which they were to pass and in securing a royal passport. This was written on a narrow strip of palm leaf about four feet long, and carried in a bamboo covered with a red cloth. The very sight of this cloth-covered bamboo was enough to secure the respect of the people. Without it they could neither have travelled through the country nor preached and given out their pony-load of tracts. (1912 St. John 61,62).



Their route took them northeastward past the present Maymyo, down through the deep Goteik Gorge, and then many days onward to Lashio, the last big town this side of the Salween River. Then south nearly an equal distance to Mongnai, the largest of the Shan towns at that time. The missionaries were welcomed kindly and given chances to preach to large crowds with the *sawbwa* or governor in front, and with the nobles and court officials among the listeners. The people listened with attention, and treated the visitors with respect and often with kindness.

Being unable to go further south, on account of the unsettled state of the country, the party made a detour northwesterly to the Sittang River valley where they parted to return to their respective homes in Toungoo and Rangoon. The difficulty of such a trip at that early period can only be appreciated by those who know the country first hand. It was no mean undertaking.

Mr. Cushing kept a journal of the trip in which he summed up his impressions of the country as follows: "In a few lines I cannot do justice to the beautiful country which I have been permitted to visit. Other countries may have scenery in which there is more sublimity, but for diversity and loveliness of landscape, I venture to say that the Shan country is unsurpassed. It is a land of mountains and valleys...The mountain rivulets are very numerous and give an excellent opportunity for irrigation."

**Mongnai Picked as Future Mission Station.**<sup>1</sup> Mr. Cushing decided that Mongnai was the best location for a Shan Mission station and that the language spoken there was the most suitable in which to develop a literature. He was convinced that any missionary who wanted to communicate with the people living in the interior must do so through the medium of the Shan language. (1945 St. John 471).

**Preparation for Shan Literary Work.** Back in Toungoo, with the help of their Shan teacher, Maung Nu, who knew very little Burmese, the Cushings began their formal language study. Without grammar and dictionary, with nothing but their own

1. Katherine Read's recent book, *Bamboo Hospital*, graphically tells the story of the development of Christian work at Mongnai.



eyes, ears, and tongues, aided by those of their teacher, they went to work much as Adoniram Judson had done fifty-five years before on the Burmese language. Like him, Mr. Cushing was to translate the Bible, prepare dictionaries, and produce the basic Christian literature for a people.

**An Unbelievable Journey.** In January of 1869 Mr. and Mrs. Cushing with four Shan preachers, again took the long journey to Mongnai, making friends and contacts along the way. In November of the same year they set out on an even longer trip to the walled city of Kengtung far to the east of Mongnai and the Salween River, a distance which took them fifty-two days to cover. In Kengtung the Sawbwa and the people welcomed them in a most friendly manner and listened with interest to what they had to say.

On this trip they met for the first time some of the Wa people, a race of head-hunters who lived north along the China border, among whom, at a later date, the Young families were to do a pioneer work. They met, too, the Lahu people who live over a wide area to the east of the Salween, among whom many were to follow Christ. (See chapter 40).

*Dr. Cushing preaching in a Shan fifth-day bazaar.*



From Kengtung the missionary party crossed the border into Laos and then went down to Chiengmai (Zimme) where they were entertained by Dr. and Mrs. MacGilvary and Rev. and Mrs. Wilson of the Presbyterian Mission in Siam. From Chiengmai they proceeded southwest to the Salween River where they met Mr. Hough's grandson who was the Assistant Commissioner of Papun.

Five more days of hard travelling brought the party to Shwegyin on the Sittang River where they were welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Harris of the Baptist Mission. Thence they proceeded to Rangoon by boat, having spent five months, lacking five days, in this journey which was probably the longest and most difficult ever undertaken by any missionary couple in Burma. It was no pleasure trip but undertaken to discover the distribution of the Shan people and to preach the Christian gospel. Such a feat excites our awe and admiration.

**Beginning of the Mission to the Kachins.** In addition to his pioneering of the Shan Mission, Mr. Cushing was also partly responsible for beginning Christian work among the Kachins. In 1876 after returning from their first furlough in America, the Cushings went up to Mandalay to ask permission from King Mindon to go on up the Irrawaddy River to Bhamo where one of the main caravan routes into China began. They arrived at this destination Dec. 22, 1876. Their purpose in going to Bhamo was two-fold: to reach the Saans from a second direction and to begin Christian work among the Kachin people whose villages were scattered with the Shans along the China border. These people called themselves *Jinghpaws* (Singhpos) and were sturdy mountain people who belonged to a later migration than the Shans. (1912 St. John 92ff).

The last work of Dr. Francis Mason of Toungoo had been to visit Bhamo two years earlier: there he gathered a small Kachin vocabulary and made some grammatical notes on the language. These were available to give Mr. Cushing a start in his study of Kachin. With the aid of a Kachin informant, Paw Minla, Mr. Cushing and a Karen evangelist, Thra Bo Gale from Bassein, began their study of the new language. They used Burmese



characters with some modifications to represent Kachin sounds. It was not until some years later that a shift was made to the use of Roman letters instead of the Burmese.

While these two men worked on Kachin, Mrs. Cushing and a Shan evangelist, Saya Sauna, met and talked with the crowds of curious Shans, Kachins, Chinese, and Burmese who visited their zayat.

**The Cushings Divide their Forces.** This arrangement lasted about two months when, because an expected new mission family for Toungoo had failed to arrive, the Cushings decided to divide forces, she to return to Toungoo to carry on the Shan work there while Mr. Cushing worked on with the Kachins in Bhamo.

The Kachins responded to the teaching of their American and Karen teachers, welcoming them to their mountain villages and begging for teachers to stay with them. S'Peh and another teacher from Bassein arrived in 1877. The group was also joined by Maung Hpaung from Lower Burma: so the team of Christian workers grew.

With the arrival in Bhamo of two new mission families—Rev. and Mrs. Freiday for Burmese and Shan work, and Rev. and Mrs. A. J. Lyon for Burmese and Kachin work—Mr. Cushing felt able to leave the work in their hands and return to Toungoo to join his family.

**Summary.** The Bixbys and the Cushings, with Karen and Shan associates, were able to lay the foundations of both the Shan and Kachin Missions which, in the years to come, were to reach the very borders of China, Laos, and Thailand. Mr. Cushing sowed the seed over hundreds of square miles of frontier territory, translated the Bible into Shan, and prepared the Shan Dictionary before being called to Rangoon to head up the new Baptist College in 1892.

*See chapter 36 for the further development of the church among the Shans, chapter 37 among the Kachins, and chapter 40 among the Lahus and Was.*



## 23 Adventure in Higher Education

1872-1950

**J**UST over one hundred years ago, Christians of Burma began talking of the need for a Christian college. (See page 172.) During the intervening years this adventure in higher education, called Rangoon Baptist College, was founded as a middle and high school, added normal departments after twenty-one years, an intermediate or junior college department a year later and, in 1909, the arts courses leading to the bachelor's degree with the comparable science courses added in 1916. In 1920 the college, by then called Judson College, became a constituent college in the new University of Rangoon. After World War II this college was taken over by the government and amalgamated along with the government college in a unitary university. The century, therefore, saw both the long development of a Christian college and its sudden elimination.

**Worth Every Kyat.** Whether the effort and the funds invested in Christian higher education during the century have been wasted is a question which may well be asked today when there is no longer any college to show for the efforts. Two opinions will help to answer that question.

First, a statement in 1894 by Dr. J. N. Cushing when he was principal of the college twenty-two years after its founding and just at the beginning of the period when true college classes were beginning: "I have been connected with the college two years and a half and have come to the firm conviction that there is not a more useful post in the mission work in Burma than this. The school meets a most serious and determined demand for education on the part of our large Christian community ...

I believe that it is one of the chief and most remunerative forms of Christian work to train the future leaders of the native church." (1912 St. John 163).

This statement came from the man who had helped to pioneer the evangelistic and literary work for the Shan and Kachin people. In his affections, work for these people held a high priority, yet he could say of the young college, after it had been struggling for its very existence for twenty-two years, that there was no work which took precedence in strategic importance.

The second opinion was expressed to the writer some sixty years later by Rev. G. A. Sword, Field Secretary of the Burma Baptist Mission. Before he came to that position of central leadership in the Mission, Mr. Sword had served the Kachin churches for many years and had the same ties with them that Dr. Cushing had with the Shans. Like other district missionaries, he had sometimes felt that the college had been absorbing too large a proportion of missionary and national personnel. But as the widely-travelling mission executive, he found that everywhere he went, graduates of the college (Old Judsonians) were supplying leadership in churches, schools, and community. They were in government departments and private professions. When he returned from his visits, he declared, "Judson College has been worth every *kyat* which has been invested in it. We have already had full returns from our investment."

**Early Planning and Negotiations.** As indicated in Dr. Cushing's statement above, the college was established because of a "most serious and persistent demand" for education on the part of the large Christian community. It was not started by the Baptist Mission because the missionaries felt that it would be good mission strategy—which it was—but because the Christian community was hungering for education.

While Dr. Binney of the Karen Theological Seminary was in America during the 1850's for family health reasons, he often talked with denominational leaders of the need for a Baptist College. Three benevolent laymen of Philadelphia—Wm. Bucknell, W. C. Mackintosh, and David Jayne—agreed to pay Dr. Binney's passage back to Burma and meet his salary provided he

would begin college work in connection with the Karen Seminary which would eventually grow into "Binney College." (1862 Mason 15). Mr. Binney got back to Burma in 1859 and proceeded to shift the Seminary from Moulmein to Mr. Vinton's compound in Ahlone. (See page 265.)

**The Seminary Shifts to St. John's Road.** The Karen Theological Seminary, with some college preparatory classes added, carried on in Ahlone until 1864 when, with funds given by Prof. William Ruggles of Columbia College, Washington, D. C., Mr. Binney bought from Captian Arthur Brooking—after whom Brooking Street is named—the eight acres at 143 St. John's Road, now Baptist Headquarters. This was to be the new location for the seminary which, it was hoped, would grow into a "Literary and Theological Institute for all tribes and nations of Burmah." The intention of making the institution interracial applied not only to the college section but also to the theological which, they hoped, might train both Burmese and Karen pastors. (1865 Annual Report 22). After shifting the seminary to its new location, Dr. Binney wrote on December 12, 1864, "I would you could look in upon us in our new quarters, and see how quickly we are at work, as though we had been here for years."

A number of British officers gave liberally to help meet the school's needs. Major. Sir David Russell, who lived in Russell Place at No. 5 Mission Road, gave funds for the erection of *Bougainvillea* to provide chapel and classrooms. This is the building which is now used as the Burma Baptist Convention residence and guest house. Major Russell, Sir Arthur Phayre, and General Bell all gave liberally for the support of the institution.

**Negotiations with the Missionary Union.** So matters continued for five years without much progress in implementing the plan for a college. Finally in 1870 the Karen missionaries in Burma<sup>1</sup> wrote a proposal for a "Higher Institution of Learning," urging that at least one institution should be established of a college grade; that from however low a point the institution and instruction might begin, classes should be added annually until a liberal

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1. J. Wade, J. G. Binney, D. L. Brayton, N. Harris, D. A. W. Smith, C. H. Carpenter, I. D. Colburn, J. F. Norris, and A. Bunker.



arts college was established in which qualified candidates would be permitted to study through the medium of the English language. (1871 Bapt. Missy. Mag. 241). They hoped that the college might be connected directly with the Karen Theological Seminary, but that if this were not possible, that it be placed under a board appointed for the purpose. In either case, they wanted Dr. Binney to be responsible for pushing and directing the project.

The Missionary Union approved the establishing of such a college and asked their executive Committee to start a drive to raise \$100,000 for buildings and equipment, and to include funds for current expenditures in the annual appropriations. They agreed that the college be started on the Ahlone Pwo Karen compound as soon as a suitable staff could be secured.

However, instead of opening the institution in Ahlone, the college committee purchased the compound of Mr. Bennett (now United Christian High School), which was just across West Street from the Karen Seminary. Dr. Binney was appointed president of the new school in addition to his duties in the seminary. Mr. John Packer came from teaching in the University of Missouri to teach in both the college and seminary.

The new "college" opened on May 28, 1872, with seventeen young men as pupils. The second year this number increased to forty-eight, including three girls. Though the work offered was of middle and high school grade only, most of the students were over twenty years old.

**Institution for All Groups.** Dr. Binney continued to act as head of the college until 1874 when Mr. C.H. Carpenter. (See page 179.) arrived to take charge. He wanted to move the college to Bassein, which was more of a Karen population centre, being convinced that he could do little for the college while it was located in Rangoon. But the Burma Baptist Convention, in itself interracial, insisted that the college should serve all groups co-operating in the Convention, and that Rangoon was the best place in which to serve the youth of the nation.

Another policy matter of considerable interest was that the language of instruction was to be English. To this there seemed

to be no opposition, which is rather surprising when we recall that only nineteen years earlier, at the Moulmein Convention of 1853, the teaching of English had been forbidden in mission schools.

**High Points of Academic Development.** As was indicated in the original proposal, it was planned to start the college from the lower standards and then year by year advance until a full-fledged college had been developed. This is very much what actually happened.

From 1872 to 1882 the school had only primary, middle, and high school departments. At the end of that ten-year period, the University of Calcutta recognized that the standard of the college was high enough to prepare candidates for its matriculation examination. This was the first step in the academic growth and recognition of Rangoon Baptist College.

Normal departments for training teachers in English and Burmese were opened in 1893 to help provide the many teachers needed by the 550 mission schools.

A year later Calcutta University authorized the college to begin teaching the Freshman and Sophomore years and to prepare students for the Calcutta Intermediate Examinations. It was, therefore, twenty-two years from the founding of the institution before it began to offer courses of a truly collegiate grade.

This Intermediate or Junior College status continued until 1909 when once again Calcutta University gave its approval for adding the Junior and Senior courses in arts subjects, making Rangoon Baptist College a full-fledged degree institution. Bachelor classes in chemistry and physics were opened in 1917.

In 1916 the educational authorities in Burma decided to found the University of Rangoon, with Rangoon Baptist College and the government University College becoming the constituent colleges in the new university. The new plan became effective in 1920, and from that date onward the students of Judson College, as it was called after 1919, took the examinations set by this new university rather than by Calcutta.

This move completed the fifty-year academic development of Rangoon Baptist College into Judson College, from being a local



Anglo-vernacular school to a complex of schools of a high school level (Cushing High School, Baptist English High School, and the Baptist Normal Schools), plus a full degree college which was one of the founding colleges in the University of Rangoon.

**Growth of Buildings and Campus.** The United Christian High School compound served the college well while it was small, but when the Karen Theological Seminary across West Street in 1890 moved to Seminary Hill, Insein, the high school with the normal schools expanded to occupy the former seminary compound also.

In 1909 when the college became a full-fledged degree institution, it was gradually separated from the high and normal schools, the latter remaining on the original campus and the college taking the east compound. The same year Cushing Hall was built to provide the college with adequate space.

This assignment of campuses continued until 1930 when Judson College moved to its new 56-acre site on the University Estate. American Baptists had conducted the Judson Fund Drive from 1927 to 1930 just before the big depression set in. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. contributing generously so that the new plant was completed in 1934 in spite of the depression. The government paid half the cost of the buildings, excluding the chapel and pastor's residence, with the understanding that if it should ever want to take over the Judson buildings, that it might do so by paying compensation to the amount of the Baptist investment, or half of the value of the buildings at the time of taking over.

This new campus on the banks of Kokine Lake was beautiful, with its white buildings scattered among giant forest trees. There were separate buildings for arts subjects, chemistry, physics, and biology, with a very useful assembly hall, and an administrative block containing the college library upstairs. For the residence of the students there were Benton Hall for women, and North and Willington Halls with a separate dining hall for men. The two-storey brick bungalows for both missionary and national staff numbered thirteen and were well adapted to Rangoon's climate. The last building to be erected was the large Judson Chapel at the heart of the campus where the university Christian



community came together to worship.

After the Second World War, the Judson College campus was resumed by the government in 1950, separate colleges were discontinued, and the University of Rangoon assumed the responsibility for the teaching which formerly had been done by the colleges. Only the Judson Chapel and the pastor's residence, which had received no government grant, were left to the Baptists of all the previous college campus and buildings.

The government paid compensation as formerly agreed upon; these funds together with a large gift from Dr. Wallace St. John have been used to erect a Student Christian Centre building across Promé Road from the chapel, with Mr. William Lay as the director of student activities. Rev. U Ba Hmyin is the pastor at the Judson Chapel which has full freedom to continue Christian worship on the University campus. Part of the compensation funds have been used to establish an extensive student aid programme for Baptist students in the university and the Baptist seminaries and Bible schools. Thus it is that though there is no longer a Christian college in Burma, the Christian witness and service to university students continues.

**Staff and Student Body.** After Mr. Carpenter resigned from the college, Mr. Packer replaced him, serving the college for twelve years. His staff was small, consisting of his wife and Miss Emma Chase (who was to become Mrs. Hascall), and Thra Ya Bah and Thra Pa Ka Tu, both of whom had been educated in America. It was fortunate that the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society had just been formed in 1871 and was able to help meet the need of teachers just as the college was getting started. Miss Sarah Higby and Miss M. C. Manning were other early women teachers in the college.

The student body for 1877 numbered 106: 76 Karens, 26 Burmans, 2 Indians, and 2 Anglo-Indians. In 1893 the attendance doubled when the normal and practicing schools were opened. The following year when the Freshman and Sophomore classes were begun, there was another increase of 50%. There were 438 on the rolls when these classes took their first Calcutta examinations. Between 1890 and 1900 the student body increased

from 113 to 567 in all departments.

In 1887 Mr. E. B. Roach succeeded Mr. Packer as head of the school, serving for five years. Mr. David C. Gilmore and Miss Gertrude C. Clinton, who soon became Mrs. Gilmore, began their long missionary experience as teachers in this period before true college classes had been started.

Dr. J. N. Cushing of the Shan Mission, who had already served as president of the college board, was appointed to succeed Mr. Roach in 1892. It was during his administration that Calcutta University gave affiliation to the college to enable it to begin classes of college grade. Dr. Cushing's scholarly attainments no doubt helped to secure this up-grading of the high school to an intermediate college.

When Dr. Cushing went on furlough in 1897, the administration temporarily fell on the shoulders of Prof. L. E. Hicks who was an experienced college science teacher from Denison and Nebraska Universities before coming to Burma. He did a great deal to develop the college science departments. After another term when Dr. Cushing went on his last furlough in 1905, Mr. Hicks became president in his place.

In that period when college classes were getting under way, much time and effort had to be given to the teaching of English language and literature in order to bring the students up to the Calcutta standard. Messrs. Randall, Ingram, and Herod taught in this department in succession. Pali was taught by Messrs. Gilmore, Roach, Hicks, and St. John. History was taught by Messrs. Randall, Ingram, and Safford. Chemistry and Physics were taught by Messrs. Hicks, Benninghof, and Rice. The periods of instruction of each followed somewhat in the order in which they are named. (1945 St. John 621).

In the Teachers' Training Schools opened in 1893, Messrs. Valentine, Sharp, Rice, and Knollin taught in the English school, while U Lu Din and Thra Kan Gyi were in the Burmese school.

Following the retirement of Mr. Hicks in 1911, E. W. Kelly led the college until 1916. He negotiated the inclusion of Rangoon Baptist College in the new government scheme for a University of Rangoon and the shift to the University Estate at Kokine on the



northern outskirts of the city. (1929 Annual Report).

During the principalship of Dr. Gilmore, the high schools and teachers' training departments were administratively separated from the college, Dr. Gilmore keeping charge of the college and Mr. W. St. John taking responsibility for the schools in addition to his college teaching. Randolph Howard followed Dr. Gilmore as principal from 1921 to 1924, and he in turn was followed by Dr. Gordon Jury until 1926. Dr. Wallace St. John guided the college from 1926 to 1934 while the new buildings were being constructed on the University Estate. At the conclusion of building operations, Mr. S. H. Rickard and Dr. Jury carried the administrative responsibility till 1938 when Dr. U Hla Bu became the first national principal, serving until the college closed in December 1941 at the beginning of the Japanese invasion.

Dr. Hla Bu was assisted in the administration by Dr. Jury, Vice-principal; Mr. Johnson Kan Gyi, Dean of Men; Miss Helen Hunt, Dean of Women; and Rev. L. B. Allen, College Pastor.

Shortly before the college was disbanded, the student body numbered between five and six hundred students, about one-third of whom were women and more than half of them Christians. The large staff was composed of Americans, Burmans, Karens, and Indians<sup>1</sup> who were academically qualified, understanding of the students' needs, and eager to send out graduates who would be leaders in the Christian church and community and who would serve their country well.

1. The college staff just before the war:

*Burmese:* U Tun Pe, U San Hta, U Tin Maung.

*English:* S. H. Rickard, Helen K. Hunt, Johnson Kan Gyi, Eleanor San Tay, Agnes Darrow, and Miss Buchanan.

*Pali:* Mr. Chaudhuri.

*Philosophy and Logic:* G. S. Jury, U Hla Bu, K. N. Kar, O. N. Hillman.

*History:* L. B. Allen, Barbara Stewart.

*Economics:* J. R. Andrus, Paul Geren.

*Geography:* Lester Truebold.

*Geology:* Mr. Whittington.

*Mathematics:* A. N. Johnson, Mr. Ghatak, Mr. Beckerley.

*Chemistry:* S. C. Guha, Marian Shivers.

*Physics:* D. O. Smith, Mr. Hornin, Mr. Basak, Mr. Majumdar, Mr. Jacob.

*Zoology:* G. E. Gates, Eloise Whitwer.

*Botany:* F. G. Dickason, Mrs. Whittington.

*Bible:* Most Christian staff members and some of their wives.



After the war a number of the Burman staff members, and four of the American staff—F. E. Gates, Helen K. Hunt, L. B. Allen and F. G. Dickason—taught in an interim setup, Mr. Dickason being the last missionary staff member to leave in 1950. Many of the national staff members were absorbed in the faculty of the University of Rangoon after that date, more than a hundred Christians being on the staff in 1963.

**Research and Extra-curricular Activities.** Early missionaries such as Dr. Francis Mason had set an excellent example of scientific research in his volume, *Burma, Its People and Natural Products* (1860 Mason). Dr. Cushing, as one of the early presidents of the college, was an example of the many missionaries who did outstanding work in the field of language and literature. In later years in the college Dr. St. John wrote biography and history. (1912, 1945 St. John). Dr. Gordon Gates became a world authority on earthworms, and Dr. Dickason did research work on ferns, bamboos, and Burma church history. Dr. Andrus has written *Burmese Economic Life* (1953) and *Rural Reconstruction in Burma* (1936). Dr. Cady has recently written *A History of Modern Burma* (1958).

But the academic did not monopolize all of the time of staff and students. Athletics were popular, especially football, tennis, field sports, and swimming. Staff members who gave leadership in this field were Thra Johnson Kan Gyi, John Cady, and Frederick and Bertha Dickason. Dr. Andrus led in the field of public speaking and debating, as well as in week-end rural reconstruction trips to Burmese villages. Bertha and Frederick Dickason organized a Ranger Company and Rover Scout Crew in which many students were trained as scout and guide leaders. Gordon Gates and Ada Rickard contributed greatly to the musical programmes of the college, both secular and religious. Helen Gates and Margaret Andrus furnished leadership in Christian Education and in training students to lead community Sunday Schools. Staff homes were always open to the students, and on Sunday evenings lively discussion groups took place in which students and staff shared freely.

**Conclusion.** The experiment in higher education that was

Judson College has been completed. The only remaining unit of the original school complex started in 1872 is the large Anglo-vernacular high school on the original site now called United Christian High School, a cooperative effort between Burma Baptists and Methodists, with U Ba Kyaing as principal.

It is one of the twenty-three Baptist high schools which are run by various Baptist language groups, all self-supporting and with national heads. Some of these schools have had continuous existence from the days of Judson; others are a century old, while a few are of more recent development, particularly in the frontier areas.

In the rehabilitation days after the war, representatives of the Burma Baptist Convention, the Methodist, and the Anglican churches joined together to open a National Christian College in Moulmein. Plans were well along for the opening of courses leading to the bachelor degree in arts and sciences, and some of a more technical and professional nature. The war-damaged main building of Morton Lane High School and two buildings on the Judson Boys' High School compound were repaired to accommodate the new college. But a week after the repairs had been completed, the Morton Lane main building was requisitioned for use as a Government Intermediate College. Therefore, plans for a new Christian college have had to be laid on the shelf. The Baptist community still believes strongly in education and is willing to pay to get it. Should the opportunity ever come to have a Christian college again, there would be unanimous backing for it.

## 24 Theology in Six Languages

1890 • 1963

**T**HE story of theological education during the earlier years has already been told on pages 119–123. The history from 1859 to 1890 has been recounted in the last chapter since Rangoon Baptist College and the Karen Seminary were so closely associated on their adjoining sites on St. John's Road and West Street. This chapter will continue the story of theological education from 1890 when the Karen Theological Seminary moved to its present site<sup>1</sup>.

**K.T.S. and Its Move to Insein.** Mr. D.A.W. Smith, son of Samuel Francis Smith, composer of the American hymn, *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, took the leadership of the Karen Theological Seminary in 1876 and carried the school forward with great ability and devotion for forty years, with the able help of such Karen teachers as Rev. Saw Tay.

In the period immediately preceding 1890, many of the seminary students were attacked with the serious and often fatal disease of beriberi whose cause at that time was not known but which was generally attributed to some particular condition or influence existing in the locality. This was supported by the well-known fact that certain ships had numerous cases, while others had none. Today we know that it is caused by a deficiency of vitamin B<sub>1</sub> which in Asia may result from the eating of polished rice from which the vitamin has been largely removed. Normally the deficiency *does not* occur if people eat hand-pounded rice in which the aleurone layer is left intact. It is probable

1. The writer is greatly indebted for much of the material used in this chapter to Dr. Wallace St. John's unpublished manuscript, *The Baptist Investment in Burma*, chapters 42 and 44. It was Dr. St. John who brought the writer to Judson College thirty-three years ago.



that the debility and partial paralysis which made Dr. Binney leave the seminary was due to this same vitamin deficiency. At any rate, it was the belief that the Seminary campus was an unhealthy place that caused the shift of the school from 143 St. John's Road to Insein eight miles north of Rangoon.

**The K.T.S. on Seminary Hill.** Efforts were made to raise the entrance requirements of the Seminary, for the entering students had been mature in age but of very limited preparation. Eventually, entrance requirements were raised to seventh standard pass which would correspond with American eighth grade.

After D.A.W. Smith had completed forty years as president, he was succeeded by W.F. Thomas for the next five years. (See page 198.) In 1921 Harry I. Marshall was selected to lead the K.T.S. which he did for fifteen years. In 1938 David W. Graham became the last American president of the Seminary, serving until the Japanese invasion in 1942.

Since the end of the war in 1945, Dr. Thra Chit Maung has headed the institution which now has a student body of 101. Other staff members include Thra Raleigh Dee, Thra Aung Moe, Thra Mooler, and Thra Maung Bu. Miss Marion Beebe taught in both the Seminary and the Karen Women's Bible School prior to her retirement in 1961.

During the fighting between certain Karen factions and government troops in 1949, the teakwood chapel and class building was burned to the ground and other buildings badly damaged. After peaceful conditions were restored, rehabilitation was carried out and the fine new Centennial church and class building was erected. The upstairs sanctuary seats over 1200 people. The Seminary Centennial itself came in 1945 but the war conditions delayed the building. This oldest and largest of the many Baptist seminaries is still going strong after more than a century of existence.

**Karen Women's Bible School.** A second Sgaw Karen institution on Seminary Hill is the Sgaw Karen Women's Bible School with eighty students. A training class had been carried on by Miss Lawrence for three years in Thaton. When she went on furlough a Thaton preacher wrote to the Karen Seminary,

urging that a permanent Bible School for Karen women be established. Upon the death of her husband in July 1896, Mrs. A. T. Rose, the daughter of Rev. D. L. Brayton, accepted the challenge and began plans to train Karen young women for effective Christian work. Her life-long experience in mission work in Burma, her familiarity with Burmese, the language in which her husband had done his mission work, her knowledge of Pwo Karen which was the language in which she had worked with her father in Bible translation, and her long association with Sgaw Karens fitted her admirably to take up Bible school work which she continued until her death in 1923. (1945 St. John 638 ff.)

She reported the opening of the Karen Women's Bible School on May 17, 1897 with twenty-two students the first year, about half of whom were Sgaw and half Pwo Karen. She wanted it to be known that though she had been appointed a Pwo Karen missionary, this school was to be for all Karen women.

This combined arrangement worked satisfactorily as long as Mrs. Rose was there, because she could use Burmese, Pwo, or Sgaw as the occasion demanded. But when Mrs. J.T. Elwell and Miss Elizabeth Lawrence joined the staff without Mrs. Rose's trilingual ability, class problems became more difficult with both Pwo and Sgaw students in the same class. Some students knew both languages but others did not. When Miss Tschirch of the Bassein Mission joined the staff, she could teach in Pwo Karen only, putting the Sgaw girls at a disadvantage.

Thramu E Byu joined the staff in 1912 and continued teaching till the Japanese invasion. Miss Viola Peterson joined the staff ten years later after having served in Henzada and Tharrawaddy. With her was Miss Alta Ragon who had worked in Bassein and Toungoo. The former overemphasis on Pwo Karen was now followed by an overemphasis on the Sgaw.

The important contribution that the Bible School was making to Karen church growth led to the building of the teakwood church and class building with its "Shan hat" steeple next to the bungalow that Mr. Brayton and his daughter had occupied for more than fifty years on the 121 Mission Road compound.

Miss Peterson carried on until the arrival in the school of Miss



Marion Beebe in 1934. It was at that time that the Karen Convention and the Pwo Karen Conference decided to separate the Pwo and Sgaw groups, the former to be given the use of the Emma Birch Smith Hall on the Cushing High School compound for the Karen Women's Bible School, and the latter to have the use of the original school building and its equipment. It was to become the co-educational Pwo Karen Bible School. These new starts were made in 1935.

During the last year of the combined school, there were seventy-four students of whom only eleven were Pwo Karens. Two years after the separation, the K.W.B.S. had a larger attendance than the combined school usually had, with ninety-two enrolled in three classes. Miss Charity Carman was associated with Miss Beebe and directed the work during her furlough. By 1937 four Karen women teachers<sup>1</sup> were required to handle the increasing student body. They took entire charge of the instruction in music and represented the school at Association meetings and Women's Societies, largely raising the funds for carrying on the school.

After the Second World War, plans were made to shift the Karen Women's Bible School to Seminary Hill, Insein, in order that the teaching might be more closely correlated with that of the Karen Theological Seminary. Foundations had been put in and materials collected when the fighting of 1949 began and all materials were carried off. This meant starting all over again, but eventually the fine new building was completed and the K.W.B.S. moved to its present site.

Miss Beebe and the Karen teachers gave the eighty students a thorough training and helped the girls develop their own spiritual lives. Now Naw Sharo, who has been trained both in the Burma Divinity School and Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, has recently returned to head the staff.

**Pwo Karen Bible Training School.** Previous to 1935 the Pwo Karen churches usually sent their young men for theo-

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1. Thramu E Byu began teaching in 1912, Thramu Laura in 1930, Thramu Naw Paw in 1934, and Thramu Pyu May in 1937. Thramu Paw Say joined the staff about 1950.

logical training to the Burman Seminary at Insein. A few of the Pwo Karen students who did not know Burmese well enough attended the Karen Theological Seminary, but the majority studied in Burmese and sometimes outnumbered the Burmese in their own institution.

But after the 1934 agreement with the Karen Convention making the plant of the former combined Bible School available to the Pwo Karens, they decided to make their school co-educational. Mahn Ba Kin became the first principal in 1934 and served till 1941. From 1939 Dr. C. E. Chaney taught several classes weekly till 1941 when Rev. and Mrs. C. L. Conrad were assigned to lecture in the Bible School and prepare text books. They had just begun this work when the Japanese invaded the country. (1945 St. John 610 ff.).

After the war, Miss Rebecca Anderson and Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Beaver were assigned to teach in the school. Sra Aye Pe, Sra S'Aye Myat Kyaw, Mahn Ba Yin, and Sra S'Kan have been in charge of the school one after the other. Sramu Luella San Gyaw and Sramu Alice are faithful women teachers. With help from the Pwo Karen Planned Programme, sponsored by the Pwo Karen Conference and with the financial help of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and Mr. Burchard Shepherd, the Bible School has recently been up-graded with a fourth year added to the course.

**Karen Associational Bible School.** The Karen Seminary and Bible school on Seminary Hill and the Pwo Karen Bible School at Ahlone are the central Karen Bible schools, serving whole language groups. But in addition to these, there are nine Karen Bible schools with a total enrollment of 227 which are run

| I. Association    | No. Bible Schools | Men        | Women     | Total      |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                   |                   |            |           |            |
| Moulmein-Thaton   | 2                 | 24         | 17        | 41         |
| Tavoy-Mergui      | 1                 | 4          | 8         | 12         |
| Nyaunglebin       | 1                 | 8          | 2         | 10         |
| Rangoon K.H.M.    | 1                 | 30         | 22        | 52         |
| Tharrawaddy-Prome | 1                 | 8          | 5         | 13         |
| Toungoo-Bwe       | 1                 | 12         | 12        | 24         |
| Bassein-Myaungmya | 1                 | 29         | 27        | 56         |
| Papun             | 1                 | 17         | 2         | 19         |
| <b>Totals</b>     | <b>9</b>          | <b>132</b> | <b>95</b> | <b>227</b> |



by individual Karen Associations. These schools reflect not only the vitality of the Karen Baptist Associations, but also the continuation of the early tendency towards decentralization in training of Karen Christian workers. (See page 119 ff.)

The move towards decentralisation was given added impetus by the upset conditions in the country which have existed since 1949 and made travel difficult and dangerous. Some of these schools were started as temporary measures, but a return to more normal conditions has not necessarily been followed by the disbanding of the temporary schools. Sgaw Karens seem to be spreading their training efforts almost too widely. They need to repeat the move towards co-operation which occurred when the first central Karen Seminary was started in 1845.

Two of these Bible Schools, however, have over fifty students, the largest being the one at Bassein which was started in 1942 when the central schools at Insein had to close. This school now has fifty-six students and serves 195 churches with a membership of 27,083. It therefore ranks with the central schools in size and importance. It has arranged that its graduates may get the Karen Theological Seminary degree after one additional year of study in Insein.

**The Burmese Woman's Bible School.** The Burmese Woman's Bible School grew out of the association of Miss Ruth Whitaker Ranney with Miss Hattie Phinney in Burmese evangelistic work.<sup>1</sup> They began the school in 1893 in a small building next door to Russell Place at No. 5 Mission Road. After the war this was moved to occupy the site of No. 1 Mission Road where the house had been burned during the war.

The two missionary women were especially fitted for this work by their deep interest in evangelism and by their mastery of the

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1. Miss Ranney's mother was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cephas Bennett of the Mission Press. Miss Bennett married Mr. Whitaker who died in Toungoo. (See page 187) Later, Mrs. Whitaker married Mr. Ranney of the Mission Press and her two daughters adopted the name of their step-father.

Miss Hattie Phinney reached Burma in 1855 and got acquainted with Miss Ranney through her brother, Frank Phinney, who worked in the Press. Thus began the teamwork between Miss Ranney and Miss Phinney which lasted the rest of their lives.

Burmese language. Although the entrance requirements were low, yet a thorough training was given. The graduates made sturdy and wise workers, undaunted by any rebuffs.

In 1904 when Russell Place was transferred to the growing Baptist College, U Pan Di, who had once been a Buddhist monk, and his wife, gave a new site for the Bible School on Dawna Road, Insein, where Saya Y. Judson's school is now located.

When the two founders of the school retired in 1929 after forty-four and forty-five years of service, there were forty-seven of their graduates in evangelistic work in Burmese, and forty-one in Shan mission centres.

In the following years while Miss Gertrude Teele and her Burmese associates were carrying on, Miss Mary Colgate gave Rs. 100,000 to purchase land and erect buildings just to the north of the Burmese and Karen Seminaries on Seminary Hill in order that the work of this Burmese Woman's School might be more closely linked with those institutions. The commodious new building was dedicated in 1933. (1945 St. John 644 ff.)

Miss Beatrice Pond arrived in 1937 when there were nineteen young women in the school, and carried on till the Japanese invasion. After the war, Miss Dorothy Rich headed up the school with the aid of Daw Ohn Mya, Daw Kai, and Daw Than, until she went on furlough in 1961 when Daw Thaug Tin became the first Burmese head of the school.

In 1962 the student body numbered forty women from the following language groups; Burmese, Kachin, Zomi Chin, Asho Chin, Sgaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Lisu, and Chinese. Most of these women came to the Burmese Woman's Bible School because they recognized the need for Christian workers among their own people and because they wished to use the Burmese language.

**Burman Theological Seminary.** It will be recalled (P.120, 121) that a seminary was started in Tavoy as the result of the first deputation from the Mission Board in 1836. This was supposed to be for students of all races, but when it was moved to Moulmein in 1839 under Mr. E. A. Stevens—Miss Ranney's grandfather—it became a seminary for Burmese students to all intents and purposes because the Sgaw Karens were mostly taught



in scattered Bible classes and then after 1845 in the central Karen Seminary under Mr. Binney.

When Mr. Stevens was transferred to Rangoon in 1853, he continued to carry on the many tasks which he had performed in Moulmein, including the small class for young Burmese men preparing for Christian leadership. Those from other language groups were welcomed if they cared to attend. This school, which came to be called the Burman Biblical Institute, continued under Mr. Stevens until his death in 1886. Only three regular students were reported for 1885.

This work was continued by Mr. A. T. Rose, husband of Mary Brayton Rose, with twenty-five students reported in 1892. Two years later Mr. W. F. Thomas moved this Institute to Seminary Hill in order that it might be close to the Karen Seminary. This step was important in that it helped to centralize all the Burmese and Sgaw Karen theological education on the same campus, though language differences required separate instruction.

Mr. Thomas reported in the middle of his first term that there were thirty-six students in the Burmese Seminary, one-third of them Karens, probably mostly Pwos. This highlights the fact that this institution has, from its early history, served the minority groups who could speak Burmese, especially those which had no advanced Bible training of their own.

After three years with the Seminary, Mr. Thomas handed over the administration to Mr. F. H. Eveleth in 1896 who continued as president for eleven years. This left Mr. Thomas free to teach in both the Burmese and Karen schools and to start an English department for advanced studies which developed into the Burma Divinity School.

In 1907 Mr. Eveleth retired and Mr. John McGuire began his eighteen years of service as president, assisted by Walter E. Wiatt. A. C. Hanna, grandson of Adoniram Judson, and J. C. Richardson directed the school till 1932 when Mr. Wiatt was appointed to the post. When he went on furlough, Rev. U Ba Han became vice-president and then president. In 1940, shortly before the war, Cecil Hobbs was posted to the Seminary for a year.



All the buildings of the Burman Theological Seminary were destroyed during the war by air raids so that the class and dormitory building, the chapel and teachers' houses all had to be built anew after the war was over. Dr. Ba Han still heads the school with a staff including U Myint Hla, U Kyaw Aye, and Maung Hla Pe. The student body in 1962 numbered seventy.

**The Burma Divinity School.** As has been indicated, Mr. W. F. Thomas of the Burmese Seminary started an English Department for more advanced students. In 1927 when three students<sup>1</sup> in Judson College, who wished to take a thorough course in religious instruction, inquired about going to India where such advanced work could be secured, Dr. Wiatt planned a four-year course in English for them at Insein.

From 1933 to 1938 Mr. V. W. Dyer taught in the Divinity School, giving special emphasis to gospel team evangelism. When he went on furlough, Clarence E. Chaney joined the staff. In order that the Bachelor of Theology degree might be offered, affiliation was obtained with Northern Baptist Seminary in Chicago.

After the war, Dr. Chit Maung became the president of the Burma Divinity School as well as the Karen Theological Seminary. He has been assisted by Mr. Paul Clasper as vice-president, Thra Tha Loo, Miss Alice Mae Simmons, Mr. and Mrs. William Winn, with Miss M. A. Beebe and Miss Dorothy Rich teaching courses along with many other part-time teachers from the Christian community. Methodist cooperation in the Burma Divinity School has brought extra students and financial support.

The student body comes from many of the language groups of Burma. The Sgaw Karens lead with the largest numbers, followed by the Burmese, the Zomi Chins, the Kachins, the Chinese, and the Pwo Karens in about equal numbers. The Kayahs, Mons, Pa-os, Shans, and Indians usually have one or two each. In 1962 there were sixty-two students on the roll, forty-eight being men and fourteen women. This is a considerable decrease from 1957-1960 due in part to enforcing a higher entrance requirement.

1. Saw Peter Hla, Saw Mooler, and John Thet Gyi.

Maung Maung Gale joined this trio three years later.

Affiliation with Northern Theological Seminary was terminated and, instead, the school was affiliated with the University at Serampore where the Judsons had found refuge when they first reached India in 1812. In 1961 the Divinity School started evening classes leading to the B. D. degree of Serampore.

The school has greatly widened its Southeast Asian contacts by membership in the S. E. Asia Association of Theological Schools which was officially constituted in 1959 with Dr. Paul Clasper as Secretary. This gives both the administration and staff the opportunity of meeting each other at the Annual Study Institute for Seminary Teachers, and facilitates the exchange of students, staff, and ideas.

**Bible Schools of Frontier Groups.** Because life in the mountainous areas of Upper Burma is so different from that in the large port city of Rangoon, the northern language groups maintain their own Bible schools in their own languages and settings. Such schools usually serve a whole language group or area rather than a single Association.

**Kachin Bible School.** The Kachin Mission which was started by J. N. Cushing in 1877, was carried on for a long time by Karen teachers who had received their training in the Karen Theological Seminary. It was not until 1929, when George J. Geis went on furlough after thirty-five years work in the Myit-kyina area, that the Kachin churches requested him to give his final term of service to pastoral training. This he did, teaching the classes under his raised bungalow at Bhamo from 1930 to 1933, when Kutkai was selected as a more suitable location for the school. Mr. Geis and Mr. Sword secured a 23-acre plot from the Sawbwa of Hsenwi State. By April 1935 the new buildings had been completed and the shift was made. Twenty-two students enrolled that first year in Kutkai. Following Mr. Geis' death the next year, Mr. Sword became head of the school. (1945 St. John 608 ff.)

The Kachin Bible School has grown in the intervening years, with sixty-four students in 1962, forty-five being men and nineteen women. Sara Zau Yaw is president and Rev. Donald M. Crider vice-president. This is the only Bible school using the Kachin



language to train ministers for 827 Kachin places of worship organized in 116 parish churches with a membership of 38,123. This membership makes the Kachins the second largest Baptist group in Burma, being out-numbered only by the Sgaw Karens.

**Zomi Chin Bible School.** The Zomi or Northern Chins ran schools from 1947 to 1950 in Tiddim in the north and Haka in the south to train pastors for the rapidly expanding Chin churches. These schools used the Tiddim and Haka languages as the media of instruction and accepted students who had passed only the third or fourth standard.

Realizing the need for better trained men, the Zomi Baptist Convention in 1953 started the Zomi Theological School with a 4-year course and using English as the language of instruction. It may seem strange that English is used in this frontier region unless it is realized that forty-four languages are used in the area of the Zomi Baptist Convention.

After short periods in Tiddim under Rev. S. T. Hau Go, and in Haka under Rev. R. G. Johnson and Pastor Lal Hnin, the school was shifted in 1939 to the centrally located Falam, opening with thirty-four students—twenty-seven men and seven women. Rev. Mang Khaw Pau and Saya Edward Kyon Bil assisted Rev. David Van Bik who had just returned from training in Berkeley Baptist Divinity School in California. This Zomi Baptist Theological School serves 674 churches with a membership of 36,297, making it the third largest Baptist group in Burma. (1961 Van Bik 14 ff.)

**Asho Chin Bible School.** The Asho or Southern Chins have run a Rainy Season Bible Training School in Thayetmyo as a temporary measure after the Second World War when the need for village workers was great. Many of their pastors have been trained at the Burman Theological School in Insein since the Ashos usually speak Burmese fluently.

**Pangwai Bible School.** Rev. and Mrs. Paul Lewis and Saya Ai Pun have started and run a Bible School at Pangwai, Kengtung State. The teachers have done wonderfully well at preparing mimeographed text books for the students and in conducting literacy classes among Lahu and Akha adults. Probably no other group in Burma has done so well in preparing needed



literature in recent years. In 1962 there were fifteen men and six women in the school.

**The Shan State Bible School.** This school serves all races in the Shan States where the multiplicity of languages makes necessary the selection of a common language of instruction—in this case Burmese rather than Shan. The Shan school was started in Namkham, near Dr. Seagrave's hospital, by Saya Ai Pan after the war. When the school was later shifted to Taunggyi, Saya Ai Pan came along for two years to help get the school started in its new location, after which the Pa-o pastor from Paung T'Kwa became the head. This school serves the area of the Southern Shan States Indigenous Home Mission Society particularly, but accepts students from any part of the Shan State. In 1962 there were eighteen men and one woman in the school.

**Conclusion.** At the time of the 150th anniversary of the beginning of Christian work in Burma, the eighteen theological schools and seminaries, using six different languages, have a total enrollment of 741 students, 460 being men and 281 women. Ten of these eighteen schools are run by the Sgaw Karens for 43% of the Baptist community. The graduates will become tomorrow's leaders of the 216,601 Baptist church members organized in 2,320 churches with 3,160 places of regular worship.

The administration of all the seminaries and Bible schools is now in national hands, though the Burma Baptist Convention has assigned five missionary families and three single women to the staffs of these institutions. This means that more than 25% of all Baptist missionaries are engaged in helping to train the future leaders of Burma's churches.

Seminary Hill, with its five theological institutions, gives geographical unity to the Burmese, Karen, and English central seminaries, permitting the students of the different schools to mix freely and share experiences even though they still study in different languages.

## 25 "Not to be served but to serve."

**A**LTHOUGH medical missionary work began early with the coming of Dr. Jonathan Price and Dr. J. Dawson (see chapters 6,7, and 18), yet as compared with programmes in some other countries of Asia and Africa, it would seem that medical work has had comparatively little emphasis in Burma. At least this may be claimed as true for all parts of the country other than the Shan States where at least eighteen Baptist doctors have served since 1890<sup>1</sup>. This area has had more doctors assigned to it than all other sections of Burma put together.

**Four Shan Medical Centres.** In 1890, just five years after the British took Upper Burma, the first Baptist medical work began in the Shan States when Dr. M. B. Kirkpatrick started practicing in Hsipaw, half-way between Mandalay and Lashio. He was followed there by Dr. G.T. Leeds in 1898. Their work was both needed and appreciated, but the demand for doctors in such other centres as Namkham, Mongnai, and Kengtung took precedence over that at Hsipaw. Medical work there was closed down for nine years when Dr. Leeds left, and the station was closed completely in 1916.

**Mongnai.** The second place in the Shan States where mission medical work was started was Mongnai. In 1892 Dr. Cushing took Dr. W.C. Griggs there to introduce him and get him settled. but his poor health soon forced him to return to the U.S.A. The

1. Beginning with W.B. Kirkpatrick; and followed by W.C. Griggs, A. H. Henderson, G. T. Leeds, H.C. Gibbens, R. Harper, C.A. Kirkpatrick, M.D. Miles, Ah Pon, Richard Buker, Robbin Krasu, Grace Seagrave, and Htin Po; and ending with Gordon Seagrave, San Hlaing, Ai Lun, Keith Dahlberg, and Aung Thaik who are still serving in 1963.

following year Dr. A.H. Henderson began a medical work which is so well described in the recent book, *Bamboo Hospital*. (1961 Read).

The medical work in Mongnai was handled alternately by Dr. Henderson and Dr. H. C. Gibbens until the Hendersons were shifted to Taunggyi in 1906 where they spent the next thirty-one years. The Gibbens continued in Mongnai till 1926 when they transferred to Loilem, a healthier location somewhat to the north. Following that date, Dr. Ah Pon directed the Mongnai medical programme from Taunggyi. A bad type of malaria made Mongnai a difficult place for westerners to work in the days before malarial control.

**Namkham.** The third medical mission station in the Shan States was Namkham in the Shweli River valley on the China border where work began in 1896. Dr. M.B. Kirkpatrick, who had spent his first term in Hsipaw, was assigned to this frontier station at the beginning of his second term. He opened a small hospital in the village itself where Shans, Kachins, Chinese, and Palaungs came for treatment.

When Dr. Kirkpatrick's second furlough was due, Dr. R. Harper was transferred from Hsipaw to carry on this medical work. Though he was transferred to Kengtung from 1908 to 1913 and after that to Pyinmana, he spent most of the remaining years of his life in Namkham where he died in 1922. The Namkham hospital was long named for him in memory of the good work which he did there.

Dr. Gordon Seagrave, belonging to the fourth generation of the Vinton and Seagrave family in Burma, replaced Dr. Harper in 1923, and is still the head of the hospital forty years later. It was he who built most of the present buildings on its present site on the bluff overlooking the town. Beginning with very little in the way of equipment, he built up the hospital and its equipment bit by bit. For the buildings he and his wife, "Tiny", and the nurses hauled water-worn boulders from the river separating Burma from China, and supervised the masons as they piled rock on rock.

A nurses' training school was opened in which a practical,



though not very conventional, sort of training was given which prepared the nurses for their own work plus some of the things that a doctor usually does. In an area largely without doctors, they had to be ready for anything. The two main breaks from their long hospital hours were filled with baseball and hymn-singing.

When the Japanese invasion began in 1941, Dr. Seagrave organized a surgical ambulance unit which served General Joseph Stilwell and the Chinese troops which came down into Burma to help stem the Japanese advance. But the advance was scarcely even slowed up, and the ambulance unit followed the retreating troops across the mountains into Assam. (1944 Seagrave.)

After the war, Dr. Seagrave returned to Burma with the army which helped rehabilitate his war-damaged hospital buildings which he financed with the proceeds of his books, *Burma Surgeon* and *Burma Surgeon Returns*. Because of the personal funds and gifts which he put into the rebuilding, and certain differences which had developed between him and the Mission Boards, the Namkham hospital is no longer a part of the Baptist programme in Burma. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies retain the title to the property which they lease to the Frontier Medical Missions organization which supports Dr. Seagrave.

For a number of years after the war, Dr. Ai Lun, a Shan protégé of Dr. Seagrave, acted as superintendent of the hospital during the crucial insurrection period following 1949. During that period, Dr. Grace Seagrave, Gordon's younger sister, also served till her untimely death.

**Kengtung.** The fourth place in the Shan States where mission medical work was started was Kengtung, far to the east of the Salween River. Dr. H.C. Gibbens arrived in 1904 to open a dispensary and hospital there. After serving for three years, he was transferred to Mongnai and Dr. Harper took over the Kengtung hospital for five years. There was no doctor to follow him during the ten-year period, 1913-1923. Then Dr. Henderson was sent from Mongnai to serve till a new doctor, M. D. Miles, arrived in 1925 for a five-year term. Work went on rapidly during this period because Dr. Richard Buker was added to the



staff in 1926. Statistics for 1928 showed 3,864 dispensary patients treated during the year. (1945 St. John 462 ff.)

Dr. Miles and Dr. Buker felt that they must do something to help the many people with leprosy in the Kengtung area. A survey by Dr. Buker showed that 6% of the population had the disease, or 18,000 cases in the Kengtung State. With the aid of the American Mission to Lepers, the doctors established villages in the district where life could go on in quite a normal way, each family doing its own farming. Children who were free from the disease were placed in school in a village of their own.

A very effective teamwork was practiced by Dr. Dick Buker and his twin brother, Ray, who was an evangelist. They illustrated the wisdom of the recommendation of the 1853 Missionary Convention that a doctor and a preacher should work together in order to commend Christ's benevolent message to men by curing their diseases.

In 1930 an American nurse, Miss Elva O. Jenkins, later Mrs. C. E. Hendershot, joined the hospital staff. She was fully responsible for the medical and leprosy programme during Dr. Buker's furlough from 1932 to 1934.

Wartime destruction of the hospital was nearly complete, so that Mr. Vincent Young, Dr. Keith Dahlberg, and Miss Margaret Smith, R. N., had their hands full after the war with the combined work of rebuilding and running the medical programme.

An outstation dispensary was started eighteen miles up the mountain at Pangwai—the *Cane Jungle*—where the Pangwai Bible School and Middle School are located. Students walk for days over remote mountain trails to attend these schools. There, Salama I Bo (pronounced Ee Boe) is the nurse in charge. She took her training in the Namkham Hospital and in the Burmese Woman's Bible School in Rangoon. (1959 Lewis 7-11.)

Upset conditions due to the presence of Chinese Nationalist guerrilla troops, as well as Shan insurgents, has made travel uncertain and dangerous. The leprosy villagers had to send runners through the insurgent areas to get new stocks of medicines. The Baptist and Burma Christian Council Relief Committees helped to re-outfit them with simple farm tools. Sala Ai Pan,

Lahu pastor of Pangwai and husband of Salama I Bo, gave up his church and Bible School work to spend his full time as an evangelist in the sixteen scattered leprosy villages. With 6% of the total population tainted with this infection, the problem of their care and rehabilitation is enormous. (1959 Dahlberg 25.)

**Baptist Dispensaries.** Of the four places—Hsipaw, Mongnai, Namkham, and Kengtung—where Baptist hospitals have been carried on in the Shan States, Kengtung is the only place where a hospital exists today under Baptist auspices. There are other places, however, where dispensaries are operated. Taunggyi, the administrative centre for the Shan States, has had medical work centred in the Baptist Dispensary since 1906 when the Hendersons shifted there from Mongnai. Dr. Ah Pon was a highly respected colleague who served both in Taunggyi and the other medical centres as the need arose.

This Baptist Dispensary is still carried on by Dr. San Hlaing who serves also as the medical consultant for *Rest Haven*, the rest home for recuperating tuberculosis patients. His specialty is pre-natal care; he reports about 200 outpatients per month.

Loilem, some sixty miles to the east of Taunggyi, also has a Baptist Dispensary which was established in 1926 when Dr. Gibbens moved there. Since the war, the work has been carried on by Nurse Daw Miriam, a graduate of the Moulmein Hospital, who serves people speaking five different languages.

Still another Baptist dispensary is located four miles south of Taunggyi at the Pa-o Rural Christian Centre under the leadership of Rev. and Mrs. William Hackett. Sayama Ah Gay Poh is the nurse in charge.

A second Pa-o dispensary is in the village of Loi-nang-pah to the west of Loikaw, where Sayama Daisy is in charge. She also acts as the school nurse for the large and growing Loi-nang-pah school, and supervises the medical chests which each pastor maintains. (1959 Hackett 11-13.)

**Medical Work in the Chin Hills.** The Chin Hills, with even greater need of medical services than the Shan States has had only two Baptist doctors assigned there in the sixty-four years since the Carsons first went to Haka. (See page 199.) In



1902, three years after the beginning of the Zomi Chin work, Dr. and Mrs. E. N. East reached Haka to start a Christian hospital. There he treated thousands of people annually for a period of nine years when heart trouble forced him to leave the Chin Hills because of the elevation.<sup>1</sup> His successor, Dr. J. G. Woodin, served from 1910 to 1915. Since that time no Baptist doctor has served in the Chin Hills under Baptist auspices.

The Burma Baptist Convention now helps to supply medical chests for use in the remote areas where no medical facilities are available, as in the Shan State. This service began after the war when Church World Service was able to send large quantities of basic medicines to Burma. The Convention also makes available to the four main centres of Tiddim, Falam, Haka, and Kalembo, revolving funds which permit the Associations to buy medicines down country at wholesale rates and re-sell at a little over cost plus transportation. Bazaar prices are often 200% over those in Rangoon.

**Medical Work in the Kachin Hills.** Aside from the Namkham Hospital on the edge of the Kachin area, there are now two Baptist dispensaries or small hospitals in the northern area of the Khakhu Baptist Association. The first of these is at Bawm Wang in the Triangle area between the Nmai and Mali branches of the upper Irrawaddy, which in British days was "unadministered". The dispensary was opened in 1951 under the management of a Namkham-trained nurse.

From the very first it has been a great success. The Kachin chief, in whose village the medical centre is located, has been very enthusiastic, enlisting the cooperation of both Animists and Christians in the surrounding areas. They provided all the early temporary buildings and much of the labour for the more permanent buildings erected later with Mission aid. Nurse Grace Hla and Sayama A Nang do the work of doctors as well as nurses. Tuberculosis, venereal disease, and malaria are among the commonest ailments.

A second medical centre has been conducted for seven years at Machyang Baw, but the plan is to shift this clinic to a place

1. The "hill" on which Haka is located is over 7000 feet high!



called Ting-khyet, four days journey by foot to the east.

Supplementing the medical work of these centres is the same medical chest programme already mentioned in the Shan and Chin areas. It is surprising how successful this service has been and how it has perpetuated itself in widely separated areas. The medical chests help to meet a real need. (1959 Bonney 5-6.)

**Medical Work in Lower Burma.** The main medical work in Lower Burma was begun between 1880 and 1891 by the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Small appropriations had been made for some years to help care for sick pupils in the larger boarding schools. Miss Susan Haswell in Moulmein was so impressed with the need that she opened a small hospital on the Morton Lane School Compound, employed a nurse, and had the older pupils help care for the patients. (1921 Safford 56.)

Dr. Ellen Mitchell, already fifty years of age, arrived in Burma in 1880 as the first woman missionary doctor. She had been an army nurse in the War between the States in 1861; it was only after that war that she took her medical training which she completed when forty-one years old. Miss Haswell and her girls had been praying for a woman doctor for Burma. Dr. Mitchell became the answer to their prayers.

The new doctor plunged into the study of Burmese as well as active medical work. She was aided by her Burmese teacher acting as interpreter, and by Miss A.M. Barkley, R.N., who had come to Burma at the same time. The latter helped to train eleven nurses but was transferred after two years to Zigon south of Prome. Dr. Shaw Lu (Saul), son of one of Judson's early Mon converts (see page 66), who had been trained in Bucknell University, became Dr. Mitchell's valued associate.

Dr. Mitchell worked for nine years before taking her first furlough, during which she pled the cause of medical missions. When she sailed for Burma again, she was accompanied by Miss Elizabeth Carr, a nurse who proved a faithful and able helper. They carried on an active medical programme in four local Baptist schools and, with Miss Haswell, started a home for leprosy patients which has developed into one of the best

homes and hospitals for leprosy patients in Burma.

The doctors served both rich and poor. With fees from the well-to-do, Dr. Mitchell purchased a large bungalow which she named *Mt. Pleasant*, and presented to the Baptist Mission Society. It served as the doctors' residence for many years and later became a part of the hospital plant which for some time bore her name.

Dr. Mitchell died April 5, 1901, after serving in Moulmein for twenty-two years. With her death, active mission medical work in Moulmein came to a stop. However, the vision of a hospital for women and children persisted and, in 1913, Mr. Arthur Darrow, a missionary to the Mons, was able to buy a 7-acre site for a new hospital on the hillside just beyond the girls' school with funds given by the Mons.

At about this time, Miss Selma Maxville, R. N., was sent to Moulmein, bringing with her the promised funds for a hospital building which she and Mr. Darrow planned, and which Saya Ah Pan, a Chinese Christian contractor, built in 1917. Both local residents and the government gave liberally to supplement the mission grant.

The building was ready for its roof when Dr. Martha J. Gifford<sup>1</sup> arrived as the first doctor for the new hospital. She was accompanied by Ma Hla Yin, a Mon young woman who had gone to America with the Darrows to study nursing. She taught Burmese to the new doctor, instructed the class of nurses, and became the first night supervisor of the hospital.

The first case was brought to Mt. Hope in April 1918— a young Mon man from Kamawet, perhaps anticipating the present when the hospital treats men as well as women and children. Patients came, some slowly at first, to the newly opened building, not fully trusting the western system of medicine. One day a serious case was received and emergency treatment given. Next day when the family returned, they asked the patient, "Were they as good to you while we were gone as

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1. Many of the details concerning the Moulmein Christian Hospital have been supplied by Dr. Gifford.



when we were present? " When the patient replied in the affirmative, the reaction was, "Why, this place is just like heaven! " So was confidence gradually established.

By 1921 the training of nurses was extended to four years with sicknursing followed by midwifery. Miss Emma L. Geis, R.N., daughter of Rev. and Mrs. George Geis of the Kachin Mission, arrived to help with the nursing programme. In 1922 Dr. Barbara Grey arrived in Burma, and after a year of language study and supervision of the dispensary in Taunggyi, she joined the hospital staff in Moulmein.

The first class of nurses graduated in 1922 with Naw Thein May, Naw Rosie, and Ma Po Byu being among the graduates. The Christian attitude of these nurses was the result of morning prayers and Bible study which had been a part of the programme from the beginning.

By 1924 when Dr. Gifford went on her first furlough, the nursing school had been recognized by the government, nine nurses had graduated, and thirteen more were in training. The hospital had cared for about 2000 patients. At jungle clinics where weekly visits had been made for three years, a total of 2300 patients had been treated.

Though the popularity of the hospital was growing, fear and superstition kept many patients from coming for treatment. The relatives of one village tuberculosis patient appealed to the *nats* (evil spirits): they prepared dough and moulded it into seven shapes plus a crude image of the patient herself. Fruit was cut into seven different forms; seven different flowers were collected, and an offering was made every seven days. These prepared "sevens" were scattered along the path where the patient had once walked. If they disappeared, the friends would know that the *nats* had taken them and might be appeased, allowing the patient to recover. Such superstitions kept people away from the hospital and were not easily overcome.

About four years later Marjorie Wilkins, a fine young English girl, who was found to have leprosy while in college, was admitted to the isolation ward where she took both treatment and teacher's training. For many years she taught the

children in the leprosy home. A couple of decades later another young graduate of Judson and the Medical College, Dr. John Edwards, contracted the same disease. Fortunately, by that time, treatment had been so improved that he recovered completely, but he determined to stay on to care for the patients and to establish a hospital. Having trained in surgery under Dr. Brand at Vellore Hospital in South India in the repair of hands and feet which had been damaged by the disease, he is now doing outstanding work in the rehabilitation of patients and in preparing them to go back into normal life again. Dr. Ah Ma, who has recently retired from the staff of the Moulmein Christian Hospital, has become the Honorary Superintendent of the Leprosy Home in the place of Miss Marion Shivers who gave so much inspiration to the leprosy programme.

In 1925 Dr. Grace Seagrave, sister of Dr. Gordon Seagrave, joined the staff. Her ability in Burma languages and music was especially appreciated by the student nurses. A new and spacious nurses' home was made possible in 1927 by gifts from Dr. Grey's family. The nursing staff was strengthened in 1928 by the coming of Miss Lillian V. Salsman who is still remembered for starting the Sunday morning hymn singing in the hospital wards. Ma Hla Yin and three other graduates of the hospital helped to teach the thirty student nurses.

Fortunately, the main buildings of the hospital survived the Second World War. Miss Mary D. Thomas became business manager, relieving the doctors of much of the non-medical work. She helped to design and build a new nurses' residence and a fine new tuberculosis ward.

A truly Christian hospital is deeply appreciated. A patient in the tuberculosis ward wrote, "I am gathering ammunition to fire against those who doubt the value of institutions in the mission programme. All such doubts would vanish like dew before the morning sun if such friends could enroll in a genuinely Christian hospital for a few weeks...Each evening at 8 o'clock, those who are able, meet in Ward B for evening devotions. Here we have the "united nations" at worship—one Indian Muslim, four Chinese Buddhists, four Burmese Buddhists, four Karen Chris-



tians, and one American Christian. We sing Christian hymns, read from the Bible, and close the day with prayers together. It was a "first of its kind" experience to hear one of the Chinese Buddhists lead us in prayer one evening. His, 'Our Father, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ,' indicated that the seed of faith had taken root in his heart. Under the nurture of the Christian doctors and nurses and Sayama Daw Sait, the hospital Bible Woman, this seed is cared for." (1957 Zimmer 1-2.) The medicines do their work, but even more effective may be the new trust which comes into those lives as they worship together.

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!"

Change marches on in the hospital: Dr. Shushila and Dr. Ruth Po Yein, trained in Judson College and the Medical College of the University of Rangoon, joined the staff. Miss Maxville was kidnapped for ransom while bringing patients from the district clinic in Kamawet. When the villagers found where she was being held in a hut in a remote paddy field, they went to release her just before dawn. As they were bringing her back in an ox cart, the kidnappers ambushed the party, killing her and thirteen of the men who had risked their lives to save this Christian nurse who had given so freely of her strength to help their wives and children. Dr. Grey and Miss Thomas retired in 1957 and Dr. Ah Ma in 1962, all of them much loved and deeply respected by the community. Miss Eleanor Smith,<sup>1</sup> (daughter of "Big Joe" of Pyinmana) and Miss Ruth Keyser, missionary nurses, and Dr. Dorothy Gates and Dr. Bina Sawyer and their Burman colleagues carry on the good work of him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

**Medical Work in Rangoon.** Back in Rangoon the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society sponsored other medical work. Mrs. M.C. Douglass, who had been associated for seven years with Miss Gage at Kemmendine Girls' School,

1. Miss Smith married Rev. Robert Howard of the Methodist Mission and left the staff.

took thorough medical training during her first furlough. After her return in 1882, the Kemmendine building was enlarged and a hospital department added. In 1887 Dr. Douglass was invited by Lady Dufferin, wife of the Viceroy of India, to open a woman's hospital and nurses' training school on Mission Road. A year later, Dr. Cote, a second missionary, took over the running of Dufferin Hospital from Dr. Douglass. This hospital continues today as the largest government lying-in hospital in the country, though very few people know of its Christian beginnings. Its present head is Dr. Daw Khin Si, a Baptist woman graduate of Judson and the Medical College.

Also in Rangoon is the Baptist Spectacles Clinic, started by Miss Marian Shivers and carried on by a mission committee with Mrs. Bertha Dickason as chairman and a staff consisting of Daw Tin We, Dr. Tin Lat, and Mr. Pastina. Friends in America send out used glasses which are measured and used to fill prescriptions for Christian workers and others who cannot afford the luxury of new spectacles.

In Rangoon, too, is a Christian hospital run by the local Christian community of Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist churches as a home mission project. Burman Christian doctors and nurses have recently been given a larger share in its management which promises wider usefulness and increased medical efficiency.

**Sir San C. Po Memorial Hospital.** The Bassein-Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Association maintains a hospital and nurses' training school at Yedwinyegan. Located in an ideal sort of delta village, the hospital fits into its rural setting and serves the farmers of the area as well as others who come from a distance for treatment or training. Dr. Maung Tsin, Thramu Annie, and Miss Emilie Ballard of the Baptist Mission are demonstrating what modern medical knowledge and Christian love can accomplish in a village setting. The Association also maintains several rural health centres.



## 26 Farmers' Friends

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**J**ESUS made it plain that his followers were to feed the hungry as well as to care for the sick. Though Burma, with her relatively small population and her fertile rice fields, is much better fed than many other parts of Asia, yet much of her territory is mountainous and farming requires the greatest effort. Often, too, taboos of culture or religion keep her people from using foods that are available. Even those who have enough rice are often lacking in proteins and vitamins, and suffer from deficiency diseases.

**Pyinmana Agricultural School.** The outstanding agricultural mission work in Burma was started at Pyinmana in 1915 by Brayton Case, son of Rev. and Mrs. J. E. Case, missionaries stationed at Myingyan in the dry zone, not far south of the old Ava. Brayton had learned colloquial Burmese perfectly as a child, so that when he began his evangelistic work in Pyinmana, he had the great advantage of being able at once to communicate his ideas.

While Brayton had been studying in the University of California, he had seen how scientific methods of agriculture insured good crop returns even with only 10 inches of rainfall. Immediately he thought of his Burmese friends in the dry zone of Burma for whom the same amount of rainfall would have spelled famine. He determined to bring this new knowledge to Burma farmers together with the good news of the great Master Farmer, whose co-workers we are.

Mr. Case carried on an agricultural demonstration programme until 1923 when the Pyinmana Agricultural School was opened.

He had been able to get a large tract of land just to the east of the town, where 140 acres were devoted to field crops, seven acres to fruit orchards, and fourteen acres to vegetable gardens.

Mr. Case's associates were L. C. Whitaker (1922) and his brother, W. C. Whitaker (1923). In 1927 J.M. (Big Joe) Smith joined the group and gave the rest of his life to the dual task of agricultural instruction and evangelistic effort. That year also brought Brayton's closest associate, Lena Tillman, who became his wife. As he put it, she was a "full partner in every accomplishment." (1945 St. John 438 ff.)

Next to join the staff was William Cummings, son of Rev. and Mrs. John E. Cummings of the Henzada Burmese Mission. His youthful vigour and enthusiasm were most valuable in working with the students in class and on the demonstration farm.

The school did a certain amount of research with beans, maize, and other crops alternative to paddy, but whenever possible it relied on government agencies for this specialized type of work. Pyinmana's strength was in agricultural extension—in presenting both information and agricultural materials to farmers and persuading them to try the improved stock and methods. Barred Rock chickens and Berkshire pigs grew so popular that the usual jungle fowl type of chicken and the sway-backed pigs practically disappeared from the area. Pyinmana Co-operative Society eggs, tomatoes, and sweet corn found ready market in Rangoon. The "Bo Case" bean was so popularized that one hears its price listed in daily radio market-quotations.

Staff and students were tireless in carrying the gospel of better rural life not only to the Pyinmana area but throughout the length and breadth of the land. In 1935 Mr. Case took the graduating class on a launch tour through the delta. They carried with them band instruments, livestock, seeds, medicines, literature, and play costumes. On arrival at a village, the first item on the agenda was an inspection of the nearby fields as a demonstration to the students and as a basis for giving practical advice to the farmers. During the noonday rest period, when the villagers returned from the fields, the brass band would play and lectures on various subjects were given. Free medical treatment was given to sufferers



from itch and other skin diseases, and small packets of medicine were sold. Charts and demonstrations were prepared during the afternoon. Then more band music at dusk would bring from two to five hundred villagers from the surrounding fields and creeks. Agricultural and health talks, Burmese-style dramas about the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan, and Christian testimonies filled the evening and sent the villagers home with new ideas and new inspiration. (1936 Andrus 34 ff.)

Mr. Case became very much concerned about the hill peoples of Burma and their sub-marginal existence. On the steep mountain sides they had to cut and burn the jungle every year, plant one or two crops on slopes so steep that rains washed off all the soil in one or two seasons, and then move on to another patch of mountain side. It was only with the hardest work that the mountain people could survive. This shifting type of farming meant impermanent villages which prevented the growth of fruit trees, churches, and schools. It destroyed the mountain forests which were often replaced by tall grass jungles. Run-off of heavy monsoon rains eroded the mountain sides and caused flooding in the valleys below.

An added evil was that along the northeast border of Burma and to the east of the Salween River, the opium poppy was the villagers' only cash crop. Of light weight and great value, it could easily be carried to a distant place of sale. But opium often debauched the growers and usurped the fields which should have been producing food. Mr. Case was anxious to find some cash crop to replace this degrading drug.

In 1939 Professor Edward A. White of Cornell University and the writer accompanied Mr. Case on a 22-day cross-country trip from Lashio to Kengtung, by way of the Wa States, to study conditions first hand. (1942 White 8, 260 ff.) Following this trip, the Pyinmana Agricultural School worked out a scheme with the government to start agricultural demonstration centres in the border areas to help mountain cultivators. Mr. William Cummings (now representative of the F.A.O. of the United Nations in Burma), was put in charge of this new extension work.

The Second World War cut short this promising programme.

but Pyinmana continued to serve even during the chaotic evacuation days of 1942. It was a center of food supply to the Chinese troops who came down into Burma and, under General Stilwell, tried to stop the Japanese advance. As conditions deteriorated, Mr. Case shifted school staff, equipment, and stock to three newly prepared evacuation villages in the mountains to the east, out of the path of the advancing army. Twelve hours after the Japanese were due in Pyinmana, Mr. Case insisted on making one more visit to these villages to say goodbye to his people, covering the sixteen miles on foot in the dark, while the writer crouched behind the bushes lining the main road to see if the Japanese had passed and cut them off.

Mr. Case ultimately helped General Stilwell, the remnant of his troops, and the Seagrave Ambulance Unit cross Upper Burma and the Naga Hills to India. After the war when Mr. Case was coming back into Burma, he was drowned near Indawgyi Lake. (1944 Seagrave.)

In the diary of an American soldier under the date of June 28, 1944, occurred this entry: "Mr. Case, an American missionary, who walked out of Burma with General Stilwell and who is gardening his way back with Stilwell, is with us today. Mr. Case, using his contacts with village farmers in Burma, gathered food that kept the harried armies from perishing... Now he has helped to rehabilitate the war-scattered villagers. He has just heard that thousands are near starvation in the newly captured areas... He will organize native boat-convoys to carry food to these stranded areas and he will start gardens growing again... This man is a true missionary and may be the greatest man I shall ever know."

July 19, 1944. "I have just learned of Mr. Case's death on July 14. He was drowned when a river raft, on which he was travelling, was swamped. He was taking food and seeds to his hungry people."

The Governor of Burma cabled the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society on the occasion of Mr. Case's death: "Burma thanks the A.B.F.M.S. for Brayton Case. His Agricultural School at Pyinmana was a national asset. His work during evacuation



and in liberated areas, invaluable." (1955 Read).

Mr. Case's spirit, his labours, and his enthusiasm live on in the lives of those he has trained. After the war C.R. Horton, William Rice, and Roger Getz continued the work in Pinyinmana, but by 1949, when the Communists took the area, they all had to leave. Later the government regained control, took over the school and ran it in cooperation with the Ford Foundation. It still continues as a government institution.

**Rural Reconstruction.** Enthusiasm for rural service developed in an unexpected quarter when Dr. J. R. Andrus, head of the Economics Department of Judson College, and F. G. Dickason, with the college Rover Scouts, began recreational and health work in Htantabin Village on the edge of the University Estate, using all the help that they could get from various government departments. Dr. Andrus took student groups on week-ends and long vacations to such villages as Mingaladon, Hlawga, Shwe Pyi, Ingyingon, and Kauhmygyaung. Village Improvement Societies were founded which stressed self-help. Lectures, demonstrations, and materials were provided on such subjects as public health, gardening, co-operation, modern political development, rural life in Denmark, practical science and poultry farming. With the co-operation of the Improvement Societies, libraries were started, bore-hole latrines dug, homemakers' societies organized, the sick treated and medicines made available, masonry wells constructed; and village roads built. On Sunday, the Christian students led Sunday Schools in which the children learned songs and Bible stories and the adults listened to the message of the abundant life in Christ. (1936 Andrus 72 ff.)

Since the Second World War, something of the service element of rural reconstruction has been continued in work camps sponsored by the Student Christian Movement and other Christian youth groups. Some government officials were so impressed with the spirit of these camps held in 1962 that they have organized similar groups in 1963.

**Yedwinyegan Agricultural School.** The only agricultural school run by Burma Baptists at present is located not far

from the Sir San C. Po Memorial Hospital at Yedwinyegan. Started by the Bassein-Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Baptist Association, the school is now run by the Agricultural Committee of the Burma Baptist Convention with Dr. William Hackett of the Pang T' Kwa Rural Centre as its chairman. The school is managed by Thra Pah Tser who had his training in Judson College and the Agricultural College in Allahabad, India. He is assisted by Mr. Shadrach Po and Saw Lincoln. This is a down-to-earth agricultural school in a genuinely rural setting, where students from all parts of Burma learn first hand how to raise pigs and chickens, and to increase the production of rice, vegetables, and fruit.

Compensation funds paid for the Pyinmana Agricultural School have been used to help establish this new school with its much simpler type of building. Unlike its forerunner, this school is managed completely by Burma nationals. It should make a very real contribution to the improvement of rural life under the present government with its emphasis on agricultural production and welfare.

**Relief and Rehabilitation.** At present the Relief and Rehabilitation Committee of the Burma Christian Council is sponsoring two extensive agricultural projects, one in the Irrawaddy delta at the Pwo Karen village of Alezu, where a former Pyinmana Agricultural School graduate is directing a demonstration farm and supplying improved ideas and stock to a circle of some seventy neighbouring villages. The second is located in a valley in the Shan States northwest of Taunggyi, for which German churches have given liberally. Several hundred acres have been secured and the work of clearing has begun. This project has great promise but is still in its infancy.



## 27 Uniting for Christ

1865-1963

**T**HE Burma Baptist Convention<sup>1</sup> (the B.B.C.) is to Baptists in Burma what the American, the Southern, the National, and the General Conventions, all rolled up in one, are to Baptists in the United States. Burma, too, has her conventions in the north and the south, in the east and the west, each serving single language groups or geographical areas. Their co-operation in the central B.B.C. is neither easy nor smooth as the different conventions are separated by wide cultural and language differences. Let us see what led to the founding of this Burma Baptist Convention, and how it has come to its present position a hundred years later.

**Why a Central Convention?** This story of the planting of the church in Burma has shown that the unifying influences during the first fifty years centred in the Baptist Missionary Union and its missionaries in Burma, and in the Christian message which was the same for all groups, though preached in different languages. So long as Judson, the founder of the Mission, was alive, he was a rallying point for all groups, but after his death the Mission was without a natural head.

During the next ten years the tendency seemed to be toward dividing into compartments. As already recorded, five Karen missionaries left the American Baptist Missionary Union as a result of policy disagreements following the 1853 Convention. (See p. 151) The churches which they led also separated from

1. The name, *Burma Baptist Missionary Convention*, was used from 1865 to 1941 when it was changed to *All-Burma Baptist Convention*. For convenience sake, we will use the present shorter form, *Burma Baptist Convention*.

other Baptist Christians whose missionaries had remained with the Missionary Union.

Then in 1863 Mrs. Mason's hallucinations concerning a "God language" divided the churches on the rapidly growing Toungoo field (see page 189), and even took some of them out of the denomination entirely. So the three areas having the largest Karen Baptist population—Bassein, Rangoon, and Toungoo—were upset and uncertain of their relationships with other Christians.

Further division was unintentionally introduced in 1859 when the Missionary Union replaced the long-established Missions, based on the local mission station, e.g., the Rangoon Burmese Mission, the Rangoon Karen Mission, the Moulmein Burmese Mission, the Moulmein Karen Mission, etc., by larger units based entirely on language groupings—the Burmese Mission, the Karen Mission, and the Shan Mission. Theoretically, the reduction of the ten station missions to three language-group missions, should have resulted in greater unity. But travel was slow—it took two weeks to go from Rangoon to Toungoo by boat via the Sittang River—with the result that language-group leaders seldom could meet together, as church leaders in each station formerly had done. The new organization on a language-group basis tended to decrease the easy give and take between the Burmese, the Karens, and Shans which had formerly taken place in the various stations. At the same time, all missionaries were made directly responsible to the Missionary Union in America, thus eliminating their former partial responsibility to the station group. The new organization was intended to bring greater unity, but in the beginning, at least, it brought isolation.

The tide began to turn in October 1861 when three of the missionaries who had left the Missionary Union—Brayton, Harris, and Rose—were re-appointed. Though Mr. Beecher did not return, he was very eager to see the breach healed between the Karens of Bassein and Rangoon, and other Christians.

In 1864 a paper called "Retrospective and Prospective Aspects of Missions" was presented at the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Missionary Union in America. It proposed that a General Con-





ference, purely evangelistic in character, and without disciplinary powers, be organized in Burma which would include all Baptists. To it should at once be transferred the responsibility and care of many of the details formerly managed by the Executive Committee in Boston. Though the missionaries were to be included as members, national leaders were to be in the great majority. The aim was to form in Burma an agency which would, in time, assume the sole responsibility for evangelizing the country. (1866 Missionary Magazine 220). It was hoped that such a convention might help to counteract the lack of co-ordination which resulted after the mission station organization was given up and each missionary had become independent of his colleagues.

The Missionary Union considered that a central convention would help to correct the tendency of disciples in Burma to form a group around their own *saya* or teacher, feeling that they were "of Judson", or Wade, or Cushing, just as in New Testament times, some Christians had said that they were followers of Paul, others of Apollos. All needed to recognize that they were "of Christ". Such a realization would help to bring unity out of diversity in the Baptist community.

This was an important lesson to teach, for the Missionary Union did not want to align Burma Baptists with American Baptists, but with Christ. For the Missionary Union was in Burma only for a limited time and for a limited work. Its sole business, as a missionary agency, was to plant Christianity. When that was done, it intended to turn its attention to other localities and other peoples. (1866 Missionary Magazine 222).

**Burma Baptist Missionary Convention Formed.** A consultation of Burma Baptist leaders which had been planned for 1864, had to be postponed till October 1865 when missionaries and seventy national leaders met for a week in Rangoon to form the Convention. Messrs. Beecher, Luther, and Vinton of the Free Baptist Mission were also present and took an active part in working out the details of the constitution. Even those people who were the most conservative and cautious, finally were well satisfied and happy with the outcome.

Three hundred and sixty people attended the first Annual Meet-

ing of the Convention in 1866 on the present Baptist Headquarters compound, in a bamboo *basha* erected for the occasion. Mr. Bennett of the Mission Press acted as chairman of the meetings and was elected the first president. The four vice-presidents were Thra Quala, Saya U En, Thra Po Kway, and Rev. J. S. Beecher.

This first meeting set the pattern for those of succeeding years: the reports from home missionaries appointed by the Convention, the planning for further growth of the church, and the further development of Baptist schools.

The Convention united in a number of resolutions on education, as the delegates were convinced that great advances must be made if the churches were to be adequately strengthened. They hoped that other institutions like the Bassein Normal and Industrial School might be opened throughout Burma. They resolved that a Burmese department and teacher should be added to the Karen Seminary. And finally, they expressed the need for a college which would provide an education similar to that of their American teachers.

Periods for prayer and inspiration were intermixed with business, and opportunities were given for delegates from all parts of the country to get to know each other. All agreed that a unity of mind as the Lord's servants, and a concord in prayer were essential to the highest success in presenting the gospel. They also agreed that co-operation in work was essential. They liked the wording of the constitution: "Calling forth and combining *prayers and efforts*." What they wanted was for all who were of one faith to present an unbroken front, inspired by the spirit of love and loyalty to Christ. (1866 Annual Report 22 ff.)

True, Burma has her northerners and southerners, her different language and cultural groups. The problems of concord, sympathy, and united effort are still with us today. But we *are* working together; we are keeping up a steady pressure against misunderstanding and disunity, though the battle is perennial and far from won. As on the occasion of the First Annual Meeting, <sup>and</sup> <sup>Saya</sup> <sup>Ann</sup> on the 150th Anniversary of the coming of Adoniram <sup>and</sup> <sup>Ann</sup> Judson, the Burma Baptist Convention needs the praye



backing of all who unite in one faith and one baptism.

**Co-operation Increases.** Back home after the convention meeting in Rangoon, the delegates reported to their churches and associations. Some animated discussions took place concerning the "Great Convention". Questions were asked: "Could the Burmese and Karens work harmoniously together?" "Was it likely to be a permanent association?" "Could they afford to pay full-time salaried officers, particularly a treasurer?"

In Bassein the churches decided to hold off for awhile though the Convention was warmly advocated by the missionaries of both the Free and the American Baptist Missionary Unions. The Rangoon Karens also decided to wait, as did part of those at Toungoo. Gradually, however, cordiality of feeling increased, and in 1870 the Bassein churches united with the Convention. The same year Dr. Mason of Toungoo gave his whole hearted support, and the Rangoon Karens joined two years later.

**Development of Home Mission Work.** While those who formed the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention pled for combining resources and efforts in order "to extend the work of evangelization to all regions within our reach which do not  
*We are working together, however imperfectly.*



receive the gospel from other agencies", they in no way intended to interfere with the utmost freedom of the different Associations and language-group Conventions. Nor did they want to disturb any of the existing home mission societies and their programmes. They did not want to enter any areas which these already existing societies were able to cultivate. But over and above the utmost that the associational home mission societies could do, there were vast "regions beyond" where with the blessings of God, the churches of Burma, working together, could send the gospel—up those rivers that flow from the icy north, and over the mountains, or through the deep passes on the east into the fertile valleys beyond.

Today, the associational work tends to have become limited to the associational areas. The language-group Baptist Conventions, to which the Associations belong, have taken the responsibility of directing the work at a distance as, for example, the Kachin Baptist Convention work with the northern Nagas, the Zomi Chin Convention with the Chins in the Mt. Victoria area far to the south, and the Karen Baptist Convention with the Karens of Thailand.

The home mission programme of the Burma Baptist Convention, which for so long consisted in the support of scattered evangelists, has now become centralized in three home mission fields: the Lahu-Wa areas to the east of Lashio under the direction of Saya Aung Din, the eastern Shan State under Saya John Po, and the western Shan area under Saya Ko Willie. A fourth area in which the Convention is interested is the southern Naga region where Thra Simpson is working, but this has not yet been recognized as a Convention mission field.

As fast as these frontier areas develop to the place where they can form their own churches and associations, they will cease to be home mission fields and will affiliate with an area or language-group Baptist convention. When this goal is achieved, the B.B.C. will be able to help other new areas. At present the Evangelism Committee of the B.B.C., with Thra Khant Gyi as director, has the responsibility for guiding the home mission programme.



**Development of Convention Organization.** The intention of the founders of the Convention was that both national leaders and missionaries should be members, but that the former should greatly outnumber the latter. This proportion has been maintained from the beginning, as is shown by the records of the Convention annual meetings.

However, in spite of their much smaller numbers, missionaries were usually elected in the early years to the offices of President, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer. Rev. Cephas Bennett served as the first president and for a number of times thereafter. Other missionaries who served in this post for a number of years were Jonathan Wade, J. N. Cushing and W.F. Thomas. The last missionary to be elected president was B. C. Case in 1918. The first national to become president was Saya L. T. Ah Syoo of Moulmein in 1919. He was followed by U Ba Te and Thra Toe Khut. Since 1919 the post has been rotated among leaders of the respective language groups.

The post of Corresponding Secretary was filled by E.A. Stevens and A. T. Rose in the early years, but by the early 1890's, nationals were being elected. Rev. T. Than Bya of Bassein served repeatedly up to 1920 after which Thra J. Kan Gyi was elected for several terms. Pati Arthur Shwe Taw began his long service which lasted from about 1936 to 1953, after which he continued for some time as treasurer.

At the Convention reorganization meeting held in Maymyo in 1953, Thra Tun Shein became the first full-time General Secretary, with the Mission Secretary, Rev. E.E. Sowards, as the first Associate Secretary. Thra Tun Shein served till 1961 when Sra S'Aye Myat Kyaw was elected to the post, with Mrs. Louise Paw and Nai Ba Shin now serving as Associate Secretaries.

The post of Honorary Treasurer was given to missionaries until after the Second World War. The first to be elected was D. L. Brayton. Others who served long periods were A. E. Seagrave and E.B. Roach. In the present Convention set-up, the full-time post is held by U Kyaw Khin.

Thus the transition from missionary to national leadership in the B.B.C. has been gradual, according to the will of the voters.





The process is now complete.

**Talk of Transfer of Responsibility.** In the paper presented to the Baptist Missionary Union in 1864 (see p. 253) was the recommendation that responsibility for many details formerly managed by the Executive Committee in Boston should be transferred to the new convention. The implementation of this recommendation has been long in coming, and the B.B.C. was to continue for many years primarily as a common meeting place for all Baptists, and with a relatively small home mission programme.

This transfer of responsibility to the Convention seemingly had to wait until after there had been some real transfer of responsibility from the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Missionary Union to its Mission in Burma. The major step in such a transfer took place at the end of the last century when the Burma Baptist Missionary Conference was formed in 1887 and a constitution adopted in 1898. A Committee of Reference was formed in 1900 to act between the annual meetings of the Conference. It was not until 1918 that the office of Field Secretary was established.

Various Mission committees were set up as the need arose: the Language Examination Committee in 1899, the College Trustees in 1902, the Press Advisory Committee in 1906, the Property Committee in 1908, women on the Reference Committee in 1910, the Evangelism Committee in 1910, members appointed to the Burma Christian Council in 1914, and the Committee for Woman's Work in 1920.

The Mission Conference planned the use of mission appropriations and co-ordinated much of the Christian work going on throughout the country. In the meantime the B.B.C. marked time and remained rather static. (1926 Hughes 16 ff.)

Late in the year 1925 the Board of Managers of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies—a new name for the American Baptist Missionary Union—held a consultative conference with representatives from the ten countries where they carried on Baptist missionary work. An important decision was taken to strengthen the existing joint organizations of nationals and mis-

sionaries in each country. For Burma, this meant strengthening the B.B.C., but very little was actually done until Foreign Secretary Joseph C. Robbins visited Burma in 1929 just as the world-wide financial depression was starting. As a result of this the Burma (Burmese) Baptist Missionary Committee was established, composed of nine representatives of the Burma Baptist Mission Society and three missionaries. This Joint Committee was to be responsible for the administration of all work and all funds entrusted to it by the A.B.F.M.S. and the Burma Baptist Mission Society for Burmese work. A similar organization was started to administer Karen work. This plan had been devised by the Reference Committee of the Burma Baptist Missionary Conference. (1930 Annual Report 46 ff).

But this attempt to set up Joint Committees for Burmese and Karen work was really by-passing the Burma Baptist Convention entirely, because in them the Mission shared responsibility with groups on a language level rather than on a national level. (1935 Hinton 165).

A certain amount of responsibility was, no doubt, transferred to the language group organizations, but often work was either "dumped" or closed, for the story of the 1930's was one of continued retrenchment of staff and work appropriations, due to the severity of the world-wide depression. From the high point in 1925, American Baptist help dropped to zero at the beginning of the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942.

**War Brings Disruption.** All was confusion as bombs dropped and urban populations fled. Villagers in the invasion path also hurried to what they hoped were safer spots. Some towns such as Toungoo, Pyinmana, and Mandalay were almost completely destroyed by bombs and fire. What was left standing was often considered legitimate prey by looters.

The genius of the Baptist system of independent churches was most evident during those war years. Not being used to central control, the churches were able, in many cases, to carry on and remain in contact with neighbouring churches. Wider contacts were difficult or impossible. Quite often the Christians of different denominations were thrown together as refugees and found that



their basic faith in Christ let them worship together as they had not done in peace time.

As the war drew towards its climax in Burma, Christian groups began to plan the reoccupation of their school and church properties, often pawning what little jewelry they had left to get enough money to start rehabilitation.

The Baptist missionaries who had evacuated to China and India felt a heavy burden of guilt that so little real transfer of responsibility had been carried out before the cataclysm of war had begun. In their Mission Conference meeting in Landour, Mussouri, in 1942, they pledged themselves to real transfer of responsibility should they be able to return to Burma after the war. (1942 Mission Conference Minutes, insert).

**The Baptist Council.** The missionaries were able to come back in 1945-46; many were the happy reunions with old friends. As a first effort to insure national participation in the reopening of work and the rehabilitation of property, a Council was formed of representatives of the B.B.C. and the Mission to advise on problems of higher education, Christian publications, workers' pensions, and home and foreign missions. (1955 Torbet 485). But *Judson Church and Kelly H.S., Mandalay, during Japanese raid.*



this Council was not very successful, for it had advisory powers only, when what was needed was action. Like the Joint Committees mentioned earlier, this Council tended to by-pass the B.B.C. as an organization. Probably this was because the Convention did not yet have either the organization or the personnel to handle the mass of business.

**Civil war.** Soon after Burma became independent in January 1948, civil war broke out, with fighting taking place over much of the country, between government forces and at least five different groups of insurgents—some communist and some racial—which dragged the country into even greater destruction and hatred than had resulted from World War II. To have an enemy in one's neighbour, is very much worse than if he is an invading foreigner.

**The B.B.C. Finally Becomes the Co-ordinating Agency.** It was during this upset period that the constitution of the B.B.C. was revised, with the full approval of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies. This enabled the Convention to begin co-ordinating and planning the Baptist programme in Burma instead of the Burma Baptist Mission (now to be called the Burma Baptist Missionary Fellowship).

The first step was to get a full-time paid administrative staff, including a full-time treasurer, and an office staff to help care for the large amount of correspondence from all parts of the country.

The second step was the transfer in 1953 of the committees of the Burma Baptist Mission (see p. 260) in order that the programmes carried out by these committees should now be directed by the churches of Burma. The B.B.C. already had its own Evangelism Committees, and to this were added those on Leadership Training, Agriculture, Christian Education, Scholarships, Student Work, Relief, Medical Work, Home and Family Life, Young Peoples' Work, Property, Visual Aids, and Finance and Promotion. Most important of all was the B.E.C., the Executive Committee of the Burma Baptist Convention, which was to carry out the responsibilities which had formerly resided in the Reference Committee of the Mission. (1953 B.B.C. Minutes 4).



The third step in the transfer came in 1958 when the gifts from American Baptists, called *appropriations-in-gross*, were put into the hands of the B.E.C. for decision as to use by the various Baptist language groups and projects throughout the country.

The fourth step in 1960 was to give the B.B.C. responsibility for all foreign missionary personnel. The Baptist Missionary Fellowship remained responsible only for housing and such personal matters as the education of missionary children.

The fifth and final step in completing the transfer of responsibility from the Baptist Mission to the B.B.C. is the transfer of all mission property to an especially organized Association of Baptist Churches which has only national members. The B.B.C. itself could not qualify to receive the property because it includes in its membership certain non-citizens. This transfer is being carried out during the 150th Anniversary year, but is not yet completed. In the meantime, there is very close co-operation between the Property Committees of the Missionary Fellowship and the B.B.C.

**Relation with Other Christian Bodies.** As the Convention helps to bring Burma Baptists together, so too, it links Burma Baptists with other Christians. In addition to the long-standing family relationship with American Baptists, the Convention joins with other Protestant groups in Burma through the Burma Christian Council of which Rev. John Thet Gyi is the General Secretary. It links Burma Baptists with other Christian groups in this part of the world through the East Asia Christian Conference of which U Kyaw Than is one of the Joint Secretaries. The Convention unites us with all other Baptists through the Baptist World Alliance of which Mrs. Louise Paw is Vice-president. And through the World Council of Churches we join in a world Christian fellowship.

**The Baptist Board of Publications.** The work of some of the Convention boards and committees has already been recorded in connection with home mission, agricultural, medical, and educational work. A word needs to be said about the Baptist Board of Publications which is the worthy successor of

the Baptist Mission Presses in Moulmein, Tavoy, and Rangoon. Because all the printing equipment of the A.B.M. Press was lost during the war, the Board of Publications is now a publisher only, giving its printing work, in some eighteen different languages, to at least a half dozen different printing firms.

In addition to the Christian books, Sunday School lessons, magazines, and educational materials which it publishes in Burma languages, it purchases Bibles in these languages from the Bible Society. It also receives as gifts from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies, many fine Christian books in English.

The Board of Publications distributes books on a wholesale basis to agents in the district and operates two Christian book stores in Rangoon. After the war the publishing programme was re-started by Rev. L.A. Crain who was followed by F. G. Dickason. Rev. U Maung U was appointed the first national Publications Secretary in 1956. Mr. Dickason has become the Associate Secretary.

**Baptists in 1963.** Much time has been given to the story of the founding and growth of the Burma Baptist Convention.

*From mountain villages and valley towns they come.*





Important as this national convention is, it is the individual Christians, and the 2324 churches in which they are joined together in fellowship and worship, that stand in the focus of highest importance. Church membership in this 150th Anniversary year has reached 216,631. This figure for Baptist church membership must be doubled to make it comparable with the figures used in the government census or by other Christian denominations, which include small children in their count, for our figures are for communicants only.

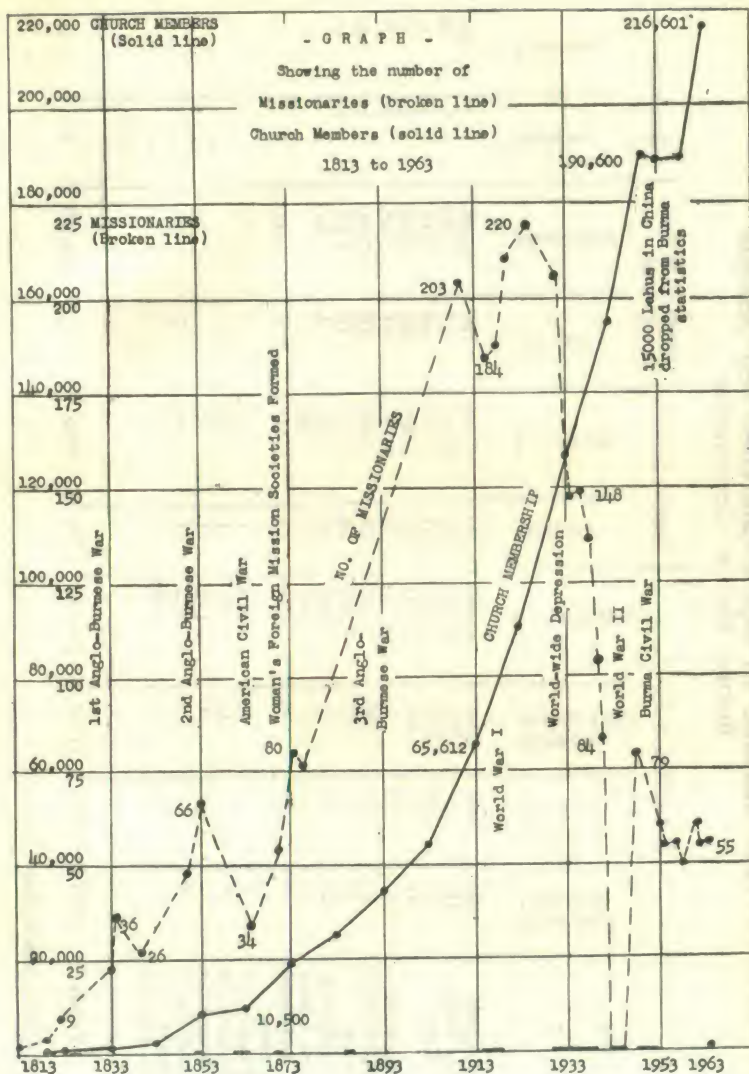
It is of interest to note that church membership doubled during each of the following periods: 1834-1837, 1837-1844, 1844-1848, 1848-1866, 1866-1884, 1884-1905, 1905-1928, and 1928-1963.

**Graph Showing Missionaries and Church Growth.** To correlate the number of Baptist missionaries assigned to Burma and the growth of the church, two sets of figures have been entered on one graph. The curve for church membership is relatively unaffected by wars or economic conditions, whereas the curve for the number of missionaries varies both with the economic condition of the supporting American Baptist churches and with the conditions of law and order in both countries. This is dramatically shown following 1925 when the factors of depression and war interacted, cutting the mission staff from its maximum size to zero in seventeen years time.

The rapid increase in mission staff following 1871 was due, in large part, to the formation of two Woman's Mission Societies in America in that year, and to their sending to Burma many young women to teach in schools, nurse in hospitals, train women church leaders, and help with evangelistic work.

One further observation may be made concerning the graph; one is tempted to say, from the roughly parallel curves for number of missionaries and church members between 1813 and 1925, that the more missionaries the more church members. But the two curves from 1925 to the present tell a very different story: membership continues rapidly upward when missionary staff is rapidly decreasing or entirely absent.

We have to conclude that the spread of the Christian gospel has become a self-sustaining reaction. The only major break in





# 1962 Statistics of Baptist Churches and Schools Burma Baptist Convention

| GROUPS                 | CHURCHES           |                   |                      |                  | Sunday Schools |            | Primary & Sec. Schools |            | Seminaries |            |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|------------|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                        | Organized Churches | Places of Worship | Baptized during 1962 | Total Membership | Number         | Enrollment | Number                 | Enrollment | Number     | Enrollment |
|                        |                    |                   |                      |                  |                |            |                        |            |            |            |
| Karen Baptist Conv.    | 911                | 1001              | 3145                 | 94,030           | 257            | 17,396     | 195                    | 14,962     | 11         | 408        |
| Kachin Baptist Conv.   | 116                | 827               | 3121                 | 38,123           | 315            | 14,047     | 98                     | 5,078      | 1          | 64         |
| Zomi Baptist Conv.     | 674                | 704               | 2500                 | 36,297*          | 411            | 32,592     | 64                     | 2,182      | 1          | 26         |
| Lahu-Wa                | 316                | 283               | 901                  | 20,203           | 103            | 2,900      | 120                    | 3,741      | 1          | 21         |
| Pwo Karen Conference   | 167                | 167               | 511                  | 13,525           | 76             | 2,332      | 55                     | 4,624      | 1          | 31         |
| Burma Bapt. Chs. Union | 62                 | 66                | 300                  | 5,341            | 21             | 3,000      | 18                     | 12,491     | 2          | 110        |
| Shans and Pa-os        | 25                 | 55                | 322                  | 3,507            | 14             | 1,313      | 18                     | 1,819      | 1          | 19         |
| Asho Chin Conference   | 29                 | 36                | 135                  | 3,103            | 31             | 851        | 4                      | 192        | ...        | ...        |
| Mon Bapt. Chs. Union   | 9                  | 9                 | 13                   | 903              | 8              | 300        | ...                    | 373        | ...        | ...        |
| Burma Bapt. Ind. Conv. | 9                  | 9                 | 35                   | 638              | 13             | 478        | 2                      | ...        | ...        | ...        |
| Without affiliation:   |                    |                   |                      |                  |                |            |                        |            |            |            |
| Immanuel English Ch.   | 1                  | 1                 | 72                   | 529              | 1              | 420        | ...                    | ...        | ...        | ...        |
| Immanuel Chinese Ch.   | 1                  | ...               | 10                   | 110              | 1              | 50         | ...                    | ...        | ...        | ...        |
| Kengtung Chinese Ch.   | 1                  | 1                 | 70                   | 170              | 1              | 75         | ...                    | ...        | ...        | ...        |
| Kambe Baptist Church   | 1                  | 1                 | 14                   | 122              | 1              | 80         | 1                      | 100        | ...        | ...        |
| Judson University Ch.  | 1                  | 1                 | 2                    | 30               | 3              | 225        | ...                    | ...        | ...        | ...        |
| Burma Baptist Conven.  | ...                | ...               | ...                  | ...              | ...            | ...        | ...                    | ...        | 1          | 62         |
| Totals                 | 2323               | 3162              | 11151                | 216,631          | 1286           | 76065      | 575                    | 45,571     | 19         | 741        |


\* Figures received too late to enter: 38,376.





the curve between 1950 and 1958 is explained by the dropping of some 15,000 Lahu Baptists living in Yunnan, China, from the Burma statistics because political conditions prevented any Burma contact with them.

The Healing of the Nations. In closing this story of the planting of the church in Burma, let us quote from the testimony of a Burmese Christian woman at the Baptist World Alliance in London: "God is wonderful and I am grateful to Him for the blessing of being in the midst of nations healed by our Heavenly Father. In *Revelation*, chapter 22, John saw the heavenly city of Jerusalem in its majestic splendour. From the throne of God there flowed out a pure river of water as it ran along the streets of the city. On either side of the river grew trees which gave life growing deep-fruit for the whole year. The leaves of the trees were used for the healing of the nations.



This picture re-

This picture re-  
power of God in  
individuals but na-  
This river of life  
throne of God and  
its course toward  
by Mr. Carey of  
Mission and Dr.

Judson of the American Baptist Mission. Those pioneers planted the tree of life in the city of Rangoon and on either side of the River Irrawaddy which runs the whole length of the country of Burma. Dr. Judson has revealed to us how to make use of the fruits and drink the water of life. He translated the Bible in our language. Every leaf of the book heals the wounds of envy, strife, and injustice in our country.

"I am one of many who drank the water of life and was healed by the leaves of the trees that grow on the banks of the river. The impossible becomes possible when God is with us." (1955 Hla Shein 151 ff).



## 28      The Church Among Burmese-speaking People

by Maung Shwe Wa

In consultation with U Ba Hmyin

**B**OOK I has dealt at length with the planting of the church in Burma. For thirteen years after the arrival of the Judsons in 1813, the whole effort of the missionaries was concentrated on preaching the Christian good news to the Burmese in Rangoon and Ava. Soon, however, the missionaries had the opportunity of preaching to the Mons, many of whom could speak Burmese but could not read it (see p. 61.) There was also the chance to preach to Indians and British soldiers who did not know enough Burmese to worship with Burmese congregations. Then there

*A Burmese Family in Mandalay*





## Book Two

# The Burma Baptist Chronicle By Language Groups

*Edited by*

**Genevieve Sharp Sowards**

**Rev. Erville E. Sowards**

**Introduction.** Baptist work in Burma is among so many different peoples that it is necessary to have separate chapters on the various language or area groups. These give the history of the church among each cultural group, their first converts, Bible translations, schools, and statistics more fully than could be done in the running story of the church as a whole.

Just as it takes pieces of stained glass in different colours to make a beautiful window, so the accounts of the different groups add to the richness of the history of the Burma Baptist Christian fellowship.

Originally it was planned that national leaders in the respective areas should write the divisional chapters. Many of them have helped greatly, but the historical source material is in Rangoon, and national leaders are busy with their work in more or less distant areas. Therefore, the checking of historical details and, in many cases, the writing and rewriting of these chapters fell to the editors of Book II.

Since Rev. Erville E. Sowards travelled extensively in all parts of Burma during his ten years as Field Secretary of the American Baptist Mission, and has followed history-in-the-making since his arrival in Burma in 1921, his representations should certainly be true to Burma's own life and thinking. Mrs. Sowards has been a writer for thirty years with quite a large amount of published material to her credit, much of which is missionary and includes this year's Burma study for American Baptist churches.

Book I, written by a single author, is unified in style and form, while Book II reflects its several authors in the variety of style and the American or English spellings. The different personalities and their viewpoints and enthusiasms add sparkle to the Burma mosaic.

were the Karens to many of whom Burmese was almost a new language (see p. 70), and the Asho Chins, the Shans, the Pa-oss, the Kachins and other hill groups whose isolation had kept them from acquiring much Burmese.

**Shift of Missionary Personnel.** By the end of the Judson era, the closure of Lower Burma to missionary efforts during the reigns of King Tharrawaddy and Pagan Min (see page 138) and the responsiveness of the minority groups, led the Mission to allocate 52% of its staff to the programme among them. Also, there was an increasing amount of general work such as the press and, at a later date, the college, the hospitals, the Agricultural School, and the Burma Divinity School which served all language groups. Increasing numbers of missionaries were assigned to them.

In 1936 Dr. C. E. Chaney, Field Secretary of the Baptist Mission, in his *Gallery of Statistical Photographs*, made a study of the designation of missionaries in Burma which shows the following percentages<sup>1</sup> from 1920 to 1935:

| Year | Burmese Work | Karen Work | Other Language Groups | General Work |
|------|--------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1920 | 30%          | 29%        | 24%                   | 17%          |
| 1925 | 28½%         | 25½%       | 26½%                  | 20%          |
| 1930 | 31%          | 22%        | 26½%                  | 21%          |
| 1935 | 30%          | 15½%       | 31%                   | 23½%         |
| 1963 | 10%          | 15%        | 31%                   | 44%          |

Over the 43-year period to 1963 the percentages of staff assigned to Burmese and Karen work both decline, while those to other language groups and general work both increase. The decrease in numbers assigned to the older work permitted a corresponding increase to newer work and to the general programme of the Burma Baptist Convention which serves all groups.

**First Responsibility.** Results so far as church membership is concerned indicate, however, that insufficient help has been given in sharing the good news of Christ with the majority group which makes up 80 to 85% of the population. It has been repeated again and again that "Burma will never be won for Christ

1. Husband and wife are counted as two units in these figures.



until the Burmese are won." (1930 Laymen's Missionary Inquiry). The task is too big for the relatively small Burmese-speaking church to be able to manage alone. All Christians need to re-dedicate themselves to the task.

**Difficulties Involved.** The difficulty of communicating the Christian faith to persons of a Buddhist background has been illustrated repeatedly in Book I.<sup>1</sup> Such men as U Shwe Ngong studied for nearly two years before becoming convinced of Christian truth, and Dr. U Yan *never* reached the stage of decision. True, Maung Shwe Bay took only three days to make up his mind, but he was the exception. (See page 35). Contrasted with these long and thorough investigations was Judson's experience among the non-Buddhist Karens north of Moulmein who sometimes asked for baptism within a few hours of first hearing the gospel preached. (Page 95.)

This difficulty of communicating the gospel to those of a Buddhist background is due in part to the widely differing concepts of ultimate reality. To Christians, God is the ultimate fact, eternal, unchanging—the creator of all. They believe that man's unique, self-conscious individuality is his essence, his "soul," and that man will have a continuing unity and identity of self-awareness on into life after death, after his one life on earth.

Again, Christians and Buddhists differ widely in their teachings about salvation. Christians believe that man cannot save himself: though he knows what is right, he is not able to do the right. Only by God's free gift can man be saved; his part is repentance from past sin and faith in accepting God's renewing and saving grace which gives him the power to lead a holy life. Primarily man is a rebel, setting his will against God's will. A "saved" man is one who lets God's will activate his life, making him more alive than before and heightening his individuality.

The two religions differ markedly in their ethical outlooks. Christianity is concretely and actively ethical. Its great words are truth, justice, mercy, and love. By love, the Christian seeks to redeem both individuals and the created and historical order.

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1. See particularly chapters 4 and 5, and pages 39, 132, 133, and 145.

**Can the Two Ever Meet?** Since the concepts of man and the very nature of reality are so different in the two religions<sup>1</sup>, one may well question whether it is possible to communicate the Christian gospel to Buddhists in a way that will be meaningful to them in terms of their own religious convictions and experiences. But, as Appleton points out (1961, 91), there is a longing in the hearts of all men for the real, the perfect, the eternal; there is a conviction that these cannot be found in the conditions of this life but must be elsewhere. This search for the real and the eternal may be the common factor that can open the door for the news that there really is an Eternal God who is not subject to change and decay, whose children we are, who literally makes "all things new" for those who follow him.

**Effective Witnessing.** Looking back over 150 years, it would perhaps seem that the Christian good news was preached in the past more effectively than in our own day. We have press and radio as well as books, yet we would not find people today in nearly every household studying the bases of the Christian faith as they did when Judson delivered tracts to the riverside villages as he went up to Prome in 1830. (See pp. 81-82.) We need to learn to use Burmese words, concepts, art forms, and psychological characteristics which can become communicative links from the gospel to the people. We need a revival of personal sharing and witnessing, each Christian family with its neighbours.

Christians of all language groups in Burma have an equal responsibility to proclaim the new outlook and demonstrate the new way of life that comes through Jesus Christ. People must be able to find in the church actual concrete salvation from their existing problems and sense of lostness. (1963 Rossman 130).

**Burmese Churches Before 1885.** Book I has traced the growth of Burmese-speaking church groups from the baptism of Maung Naw in 1819 through the formation of the first Burmese Baptist Association at Thonze in 1860, and the beginning of the

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1. For a much more thorough study of this subject the reader is referred to Winston L. King's new book, *Buddhism and Christianity, Some Bridges of Understanding*.



Shan-Burmese church in Toungoo in 1862. Before 1885 Burmese-speaking churches had been established in Rangoon, Amherst, Moulmein, Tavoy, Prome, Ava, Bassein, Henzada, Thonze, Letpadan, and Toungoo, with other groups in villages surrounding these centres.

**New Centres of Burmese Work in Upper Burma.** After the 3rd Anglo-Burmese War in 1885 a number of new centres were opened in Upper Burma where schools and churches were started for the Burmese population. Among the first missionaries to begin such work were Rev. and Mrs. J.E. Case, parents of Brayton Case of Pyinmana. They settled in **Myingyan** in 1887 where Mrs. Case started a school while her husband preached in the surrounding regions. They worked without rest for eighteen years before retiring. Two years later Rev. H. E. Dudley and his wife took up the work and learned Burmese well. After five years in Myingyan, they were transferred to Meiktila where they served for twenty-eight years more. In 1923 the Burma Baptist Mission Society took the responsibility for the Myingyan field of which U Po Min took charge about 1927.

In 1889 Mr. and Mrs. John Packer who had taught for twelve years in the Baptist College in Rangoon were transferred to **Meiktila** to begin Christian work in that British cantonment centre. Following the usual pattern, they began school and church work for the Burmese residents. Following Mr. Packer's death in 1907, the Dudleys were transferred from Myingyan. Before their retirement in 1935, arrangements were made to transfer the care of this field to the Burma Baptist Mission Society. In 1940 Saya U Ba, for many years the efficient headmaster of the large Cushing High School in Rangoon, took charge for the Society. Unfortunately the Japanese invasion cut short his work.

A third new centre was **Mandalay**, which had been established as the new capital of Burma by King Mindon and occupied in 1860. A number of Baptist missionaries had lived earlier in Ava and Amarapura, but the first to be assigned to Mandalay was Rev. E.W. Kelly in early 1886. A year later he secured the land where the Burma Baptist Mission Girls' School now stands and built his house there. Three blocks north of this

site he secured a second plot and opened a boys' school the same year. In 1887 his wife began the girls' school on the ground floor of their residence. Mrs. Hancock was designated to Burmese evangelistic work: it was she who built a house and chapel on the Thayeze compound at the northwest corner of the moat the same year.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary (August 9, 1888) of the birth of Adoniram Judson, it was decided to build a Judson Memorial Church in Mandalay. The first Rs. 3,600 of the total cost of Rs. 31,000 was given by an aged Burmese woman of Tavoy, one of the few persons surviving who had been baptized by Dr. Judson. The completed church was dedicated on November 2, 1890, at the time of the annual meeting of the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention.

The names of many missionaries who served in Mandalay are still remembered. These include Rev. John McGuire and Miss Ulery who become his wife, and Rev. and Mrs. L.H. Mosier. Others were Miss A.E. Frederickson (after whom the Burmese Women Workers' house in Rangoon is named), Mr. Benninghof, Miss Bertha Davis, Rev. and Mrs. E. Tribolet, Miss Julia Parrott, Mr. and Mrs. H.W. Smith, and Rev. and Mrs. Seldon McCurdy who took over the evangelistic work when Mr. Kelly was transferred to Rangoon in 1911 to become principal of Baptist College. Mrs. Elliott, Miss Hattie May Price, and Miss Alice Thayer all helped with the Girls' School, and Rev. and Mrs. H.E. Hinton were appointed to Kelly High School, in 1921. At the same time Rev. Ernest Grigg took up the evangelistic work. In 1923 Miss Marian Reifsneider joined Miss Parrott in the work at Thayeze. The present fine buildings at the Girls' School were built in 1924.

The pastor of the Judson Memorial Church was for many years U Htaik Gyi. Later U Tha Din was a valiant leader of the Mandalay Christian community. U Ba Hlaing, a Baptist layman, was mayor of Mandalay and active in the Christian programme. After the war he served as Secretary of the Burma Baptist Churches Union and is now the ordained pastor of the Burmese church in Moulmein.

Just before the war, U Thet Swe was principal of Kelly High



School; he was killed during the war. At the Girls' School just before the war were Miss Adelaide Martin, Miss Alice Thayer, and Miss Lucy Wiatt, and at Thayeze were Miss Reifsneider and Miss Dorothy Wiley. The Girls' School served nobly as an evacuation centre during the invasion days. The school staff served selflessly caring for the wounded in the bombing raids. After the war old Judsonian, Daw Khin Nu, has been the principal of this large school.

During the war much of Mandalay was destroyed. The Judson Memorial Church and the Kelly High School were hit and burned (see drawing on page 262). U Chit Pe has been the much loved pastor of the Judson Church since the war.

**Sagaing**, across the river from Mandalay and old Ava, had been the early home of Dr. Price (see page 46). In 1888 Rev. and Mrs. W. H. S. Hascall were directed to open a mission station on the river near Mandalay. He selected Sagaing on the west bank as being the centre of a large and highly educated population. Mr. and Mrs. F. P. Southerland soon arrived to give nineteen years of service, literally pouring out their life energies in evangelizing the community. The last missionaries to be posted to Sagaing were Rev. and Mrs. Roger Cummings who served from 1933 to 1936.

**Maymyo**, forty miles to the northeast of Mandalay, at an elevation of 3000 feet, was chosen as an out-station of Mandalay in 1900 though no missionary was posted there for more than a decade. This hill station became well-known in Baptist circles as a hot-season resort and as the location of the Maymyo Bible Assembly grounds, of Colgate School, and the Baptist Church with its services in Burmese, English, and Karen. At one time there was also an active Hindustani congregation. Miss Laura Johnson was head of the school from 1931 until the break of the war. After the war Daw Htwa Yi has been the principal with Miss Ecco Hunt on the science staff. U Ko Ko Gyi is the pastor of the fine Burmese Church, and Rev. and Mrs. David Stimson the resident missionaries for Burmese work.

**Burmese Baptist Schools.** Many of the largest Baptist High Schools in the country are a part of the programme of the

Burmese-speaking churches. In Tavoy in the far south is the Ann Hesseltine High School with over 975 students. In Moulmein is the combined Morton Lane-Judson High School with 1476 students, of which U Aung Gywe is the principal. In Rangoon there is the United Christian High School with 1335 students in which Baptists and Methodists co-operate. Originally this school was a part of the Baptist College complex, and later Cushing High School. U Ba Kyaing is the present head, having succeeded U San Yin on his retirement. In Rangoon, also, is the Girls' High School, Kemmendine, which was started after the 2nd Anglo-Burmese War ( see page 159 ). Daw Hla Shein is the principal of this fine school of 1600 pupils and 41 teachers.

Bassein has an excellent Burmese Baptist Mission High School with U Po Sein as head. Its new school building, dedicated in 1962, makes it much easier to accommodate the many students. Other schools run by the Burmese-speaking churches are located in such towns as Myaungmya, Henzada, Prome, and Pegu.

At the end of the Second World War every school had been stripped of equipment and furnishings. In some places the buildings had been reduced to rubble, but the Christian staff and the local church members got to work to rehabilitate and rebuild. The teachers took just enough salary to pay for their food, putting every kyat possible into the school itself. Most of the schools have now very nearly reached their pre-war plant and status. The Christian teachers deserve very great credit for their untiring work.

The Burman Theological School and the Burmese Woman's Bible School at Insein have already been described in chapter 24 to which the reader is referred.

All the Burmese Baptist schools and theological institutions welcome students from all minority groups. Often 50% or more of the students come from such backgrounds because they want to study with Burmese as the medium of instruction. In this way the Burmese-speaking churches are serving the whole of the nation. They hope that in the days to come they may extend such service even further.



**Burmese Churches Begin to Work Together.** The formation of the Rangoon Burmese Baptist Association at Thonze in 1860 marked the beginning of closer co-operation between the Burmese-speaking churches in the Irrawaddy delta. The churches included in the Association at its start were Rangoon with 104 members, Thonze with 40, Letpadan with 19, Henzada with 26, and Bassein with 25, making the total membership of the founding churches 214 persons.

When the annual meeting was held in Rangoon in 1867, the Rangoon English Church (now Immanuel) sent three delegates. The co-operation of this English-speaking church with the Burmese Association continued for ten years. This raises the question whether such co-operation might well be re-established in the present day when most of the members of Immanuel Church are Burma nationals rather than foreigners.

By 1869 the churches at Prome and Inma had joined the Association, bringing its total membership to 764, more than three times the number seven years earlier. Two years later the Toungoo Shan-Burman Church joined the Association, and in 1872 the Mingaladon church. When the Zigon church joined in 1877, the name of the Association was changed from the *Rangoon* to the *Pegu Baptist Association*.

Until 1881 the Burmese Baptists in Pegu town had been affiliated with the Rangoon Pwo Karen Association, but in that year a separate Pegu Burmese Church was formed with 24 members which affiliated with the Pegu Burmese Baptist Association. By 1884 this Association had grown to 1112 members in 17 churches.

From 1884 to 1890 a realignment of churches began to take place, those churches along the railway line which had been extended to Prome in 1879, forming the new Prome Association in 1890. In 1907 the name was changed to the Prome-Tharrawaddy Baptist Association. The parent Pegu Association continued to add new churches at Syriam-Kyaukyedwin in 1886, at Paing-saung-naing in 1891, at Sagagyi, Dedaye, and Tamangyi in 1892, at Tantaywa and Kaw-hmu-chaung in 1895, at Nyaungdon in 1896, at Ma-u-bin in 1897, and Yinkan in 1900.

A second daughter association was formed in 1900 when Hen-

zada and Sagagyi formed the Henzada Baptist Association for the area on the west bank of the Irrawaddy.

In addition to the Pegu Baptist Association and the Prome and the Henzada Associations to which it had given rise, there were two associations which had not been a part of this delta group. The older of the two was the Tenasserim Talaing (Mon)-Burman Association organized in 1882 to serve the area to the east of the Sittang River from Thaton through Moulmein and Amherst to Tavoy and Mergui. In 1907 five Mon churches with 310 members withdrew to start their own Mon Association, but this new association continued its affiliation with the Burmese-speaking conference for a number of years.

The fifth association, formed in 1898 to serve the Dry Zone area of Upper Burma, was called the Aungbinle Baptist Association. These five associations continued to serve the Burmese-speaking churches until after the war in 1942 when a sixth was added, the Bassein-Myaungmya Association, serving the churches in the lower Irrawaddy delta.

**Co-operation on a National Scale.** As with all other Baptist groups in Burma, development has been from the individual Christian to his church, to the association of churches, and finally to the country-wide fellowship of prayer and action. In the previous chapter the steps have already been traced of the development of the Burma Baptist Convention as the over-all national Baptist organization in which all language-group churches come together in a united front. The steps leading to the formation of a Conference of Burmese-speaking churches were somewhat similar.

The first step towards inter-associational co-operation was taken in October 1902 when U Lu Din of the Normal Department of the Baptist College called to his home, people from the College Church and the Lanmadaw Baptist Church who were interested in a Burmese-sponsored evangelistic programme. As a result the Burma Baptist Evangelistic Society was formed to do evangelistic work among the Burmese population of the country. Magwe District on the Irrawaddy above Prome was chosen as their special field. U Lu Din resigned from the College to carry on the



new work in Magwe. The group also appointed U Tha Din of Mandalay to be their travelling evangelist.

The second step came four years later when the Burma Baptist Burmese Conference was formed, with its 1st Annual Meeting held in 1907. This Conference of all the Burmese-speaking churches met annually to seek inspiration together, to hear the reports of the work of the five associations plus the Asho Chin, Mon, and Shan groups, and to plan advance educational and evangelistic work. As was the case with the American Baptist Convention where the Mission Society preceded the Convention, so with the Burmese Conference and the Burma Baptist Evangelistic Society. As time went on, this Society acted as the Evangelistic Committee of the Conference.

This Committee in 1912 developed a country-wide evangelistic drive in response to a long-felt need. Upon the arrival in Burma after furlough of Rev. and Mrs. W.H.S. Hascall, they were asked to undertake a campaign of evangelism in the larger towns and cities with the backing of the Committee. Campaigns were held in such places as Moulmein, Bassein, Pegu, Henzada, Mandalay, etc. A large tent, visual aids, special music and singing, and house to house visitation were some of the methods employed. Student teams and groups of laymen helped during and after the special meetings. The spirit of active personal evangelism growing out of these campaigns reached even the jungle villages of Tavoy and the mountain hamlets of the Kachin Hills.

A little over a decade later outstanding work was done by teams of college students under the direction of Rev. V. W. Dyer, the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church and the general evangelist for Burma. In a dozen campaigns all over Burma, more than four hundred, mostly Burmese, became Christians in 1925. In 1929 Mr. Dyer led a Gospel Team of students to India in response to the invitation of missionaries there. They made a deep impression and their visit was long remembered by the Indian people. During a seven-year period more than two hundred students from Judson College and from the seminaries and Bible schools at Insein participated in this new approach to non-Christian youth. (1955 Torbet 468).

**Transfer of Responsibility.** In 1925 the Burma Baptist Mission Society, successor in 1922 to the Evangelistic Society, the Evangelistic Committee, and the Burma Baptist Burmese Conference, offered to take full responsibility for the mission work in the Myingyan district, with the understanding that missionaries would still help with the school.

In November 1925 the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies called a consultation of representatives of the various countries where they were carrying on mission work to discuss transfer of responsibility from the Mission to the national church organizations. The Edinburgh International Missionary Conference, the Jerusalem Reports, and the Laymen's Reports, together with the worsening financial situation in the United States, encouraged the Boards to move more rapidly to transfer wisely to the churches what had been mission responsibility. (1935 Burma News 189 ff).

In 1928 representatives of the Burmese churches suggested that the responsibility for all Burmese evangelistic and educational work should be transferred to the Burma Baptist Mission Society, with certain missionaries appointed on its managing committee. After a visit to Burma the following year by the Foreign Secretary, Joseph C. Robbins, a Joint Committee was set up composed of three missionaries and nine members of the Burma Baptist Mission Society. Nominally, at least, the evangelistic and educational work was placed under this Joint Committee which carried on its work for a number of years. (1955 Torbet 465).

In 1935 Rev. H.E. Hinton and U Shwe Hman presented papers to the Missionary Conference which recommended the strengthening of the Burma Baptist Mission Society, the dissolution of the Joint Committee, and the full transfer of responsibility to the national body. U Shwe Hman, however, cautioned against "dumping" work on the national body too fast, and asked the Mission to continue to lend a helping hand for some time to come. He also advised strengthening the present work rather than spreading out too widely. (1935 Burma News 163 ff.)

Full transfer of responsibility from the Mission to the Burmese-speaking churches was held up as people scattered in late 1941



## Burma Baptist Churches Union Statistics

| Association   | 1887     |         | 1904     |         | 1908     |         | 1913     |         | 1918     |         | 1921     |         | 1934*    |         | 1961     |         |
|---------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
|               | Churches | Members | Churches | Members | Churches | Members | Churches | Members | Churches | Members | Churches | Members | Churches | Members | Churches | Members |
| Arakan (Chin) | ...      | ...     | 15       | 447     | 14       | 346     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     |
| Aungbinle     | ...      | ...     | 7        | 447     | 11       | 389     | 13       | 663     | 10       | 851     | 10       | 1103    | 20       | 1665    | 10       | 913     |
| Henzada       | ...      | ...     | 6        | 334     | 6        | 390     | 8        | 403     | 11       | 547     | 11       | 539     | 14       | 999     | 10       | 376     |
| Bassein-      | }        |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Myaungmya     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | ...      | ...     | 4        | 379     |
| Pegu          | ...      | ...     | 16       | 993     | 15       | 839     | 15       | 1151    | 18       | 1215    | 13       | 1469    | 21       | 1610    | 20       | 2526    |
| Prome-        |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |          |         |
| Tharrawaddy   | ...      | ...     | 6        | 593     | 7        | 758     | 7        | 1059    | 8        | 1298    | 8        | 1115    | 12       | 1503    | 14       | 814     |
| Tenasserim    | ...      | ...     | 5        | 437     | 5        | 412     | 5        | 373     | 5        | 388     | 8        | 819     | 7        | 1127    | 5        | 333     |
| Totals        | 18       | 1596    | 55       | 3341    | 58       | 3133    | 48       | 3649    | 52       | 4298    | 50       | 5044    | 74       | 6904    | 63       | 5341    |

\* Figures from Chaney Statistical Report. Includes Asho Chins other than Sandoway and Thayetmyo.

and early 1942 before the Japanese invasion, It was as a part of the whole Baptist community affiliated with the Burma Baptist Convention that the Burmese-speaking churches finally began to manage all their own affairs after the war. In late 1946 the Burma Baptist Mission Society was renamed the Burma Baptist Churches Union and specifically made open to all groups which are Burmese-speaking, regardless of origin.

**Statistics of Church Membership.** The membership of the Burmese-speaking churches reached the 5000 mark by 1921 and forty-two years later they still have about the same numbers, with fluctuations up and down during the years. A number of withdrawals of non-Burmese churches from the Burmese associations to form their own language-group associations have from time to time reduced the membership listed as Burmese. These have included Karen, Asho Chin, Mon, and Shan-Pa-o churches which, after considerable periods of affiliation with the Burmese-speaking associations, have withdrawn to form their own when they had grown strong enough to do so.

**Women's Contribution.** In this summary of Burmese Baptist evangelistic and educational work, it is fitting to mention the All-Burma Baptist Women's Society and the contribution that women have made to the growth of the church. This Society was founded in 1923 with Daw Hmya as the first president who served for sixteen years. Daw May Si followed her, serving for eighteen years. The present head is Daw Saw Tint. The society has twenty-five workers placed in six different areas from Rangoon to the borders of Burma. Miss Dorothy Rich of the Burman Woman's Bible School, and Sayama Esther Byu are now giving their time to helping all women's groups in the country through the Women's Federation.

It is fitting, also, to mention with appreciation the special contribution of the single women missionaries sent out by the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Between 1920 and 1935 an average of fifteen such missionaries--48% of their total number in Burma--were helping with Burmese schools and evangelistic work. This compares with an average of nine in Sgaw Karen work, three in Pwo Karen, one in Shan, one in



Chin, two in English, three in Mon, and two in general work. In proportion to their total numbers, nearly twice as many were helping the Burmese-speaking churches as from the General Board. (1936 Chaney 9).

**Leadership of the Churches.** In spite of the long years of service given by many missionary and national leaders in the Burmese-speaking churches, it is true that in many places the periods of service were too short to allow the person to be of most use. In 1908 Rev. E.O. Stevens expressed his disappointment that up to that time no Burmese Baptist young man who had passed the seventh standard of any of the Anglo-vernacular schools had entered the Christian ministry. Though many of the pastors were devoted Christian men, their lack of general preparation must have been an obstacle in their approach to the highly educated Burmese community. Fortunately, this picture has now changed considerably although the entrance requirements to the Burman Theological Seminary still require only a seventh standard pass. Many of the leaders today have both college and seminary training, and at least seven of them have had the opportunity for advanced foreign study as well.

**The Burma Baptist Churches Union Today.** The Burmese-speaking churches today face a number of problems as they face the future. First, there are almost no rural Burmese churches though the great proportion of the Burmese population lives in villages. Second, with a few outstanding exceptions, the small town churches are too small to permit self-support. In many areas the Burmese-speaking Baptists are below the "critical mass" for a self-sustaining reaction. Back in 1937 Mr. H. W. Smith, Mission Field Secretary, emphasized the problem when he said, "Except in a few centres our Burman Christians are scattered. They are not in a position to support trained pastors." He then went on to quote from Bishop Pickett's book on Mass Movements in India: "Where Christian converts are unable to support preachers... the attempt to force them to do so by withdrawing mission appropriations must end disastrously. For a Mission to abandon these scattered groups after bringing them to confess Christianity, because they cannot do what is apparently

impossible, would be a tragic blunder." This problem is still with the leaders of the B. B. C. U. They are aware of it; those of their membership who have the ability are giving sacrificially to carry on the work. In any building project, they raise at least twice as much as available from other sources, and often meet the whole cost themselves.

There is still the problem of being able to present the Christian gospel to those with a Buddhist background. With this is linked the shortage of literature of a nature to appeal to the young people of Burma to day.

But with all these problems the B. B. C. U. has a right to look optimistically to the future. With U Ba Hmyin as part-time General Secretary (he is also the pastor of the Judson Church at the University of Rangoon), and with the help of U Maung Maung Han, U Tha Din, U Win Maung, and U Win Tin, the B.B.C.U. has never before had such a wealth of able and devoted leaders. They will carry out the policy of their churches both to serve the majority group of the country and to open their doors to people of all language groups who may wish to affiliate with the Burmese-speaking churches. They also will pioneer in closer co-operation with the Burma Baptist Convention and all other Baptist groups as well as other Protestant churches in Burma. They believe that unity is essential for Mission. They dare to believe, with U Naw and those first Christian converts, that Jesus Christ will become the light and life of all people of Burma.





## 29 Baptist Work Among The Mons

by Nai Ba Shin.

**L**OWER BURMA where Adoniram Judson started his endeavours was the territory that had been the old Mon Kingdom of Pegu. Many of the people called Burman in the old mission records were in fact Burmanized Mons. The Mons gave the Burmese their written alphabet. The Mon Kingdom was finally conquered by the Burmese Kingdom in 1757.

U Naw, Judson's first convert, is believed by some Christians to have been a Mon. Among the early converts were Hpwa Oo Ma, Hpwa Lon Ma, and Hpwa Hla-- all pure Mons, whose descendants are leaders in our churches today.

*Mons tapping rubber trees.*



The first Baptist church in Moulmein, founded by Dr. Judson, 25th November, 1827, was called the Mon-Burmese Church and since then has had a mixed membership. Chapter 9 of Book I has already reported the stories of some of the early Mon converts including Nai Myat Kyaw, Nai Mehm Boke and his wife, Ma Tee, and tells of the fine Christian contributions that these people made.

**Early Missionaries to the Mons.** The second Mrs. Judson, working with Nai Mehm Boke, began to translate the New Testament and tracts into Mon. Later, when the first missionaries designated to the Mons, Rev. and Mrs. James Haswell, arrived in 1835, she turned this work over to them. Rev. Haswell got so he could preach very well in Mon, and Mrs. Haswell, to the end of her life, delighted to visit elderly Mon ladies with whom she could talk in Mon. This became quite a missionary family, with one daughter marrying Rev. Brainerd Vinton, who became the parents of Mrs. Alice Vinton Seagrave, mother of Dr. Grace, Rachel, and Dr. Gordon, all of whom were missionaries in Burma. Another daughter, Susan, started Morton Lane Girls' School, the English Girls' High School, and the leprosy home and hospital in Moulmein, named after her. A son, J. R. Haswell, returned to Burma in 1862 and served until he died in 1877. After that there were no missionaries especially designated to the Mons till 1902.

**Mon Literature.** In translating the New Testament, Rev. J. R. Haswell worked with Nai Mehm Boke who translated from the Burmese Bible, while the missionary checked with original Greek. The first edition of the New Testament in Mon was released on 8th August 1847 at the Mission Press in Moulmein.

Nai Mehm Boke also prepared several tracts and translated hymns from Burmese which are still to be found in the Mon hymn book.

Rev. J. M. Haswell with Nai Mehm Boke would take the Mon *Digest of the Scriptures* and some tracts and visit Nai Ta who was the leader of the "Inner Law" Sect, a professional writer and musician who had spent 20 years as a monk. They exchanged books

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For clarity it should be stated that the Burmese name for these people is *Talaing*, and it is by this name they were often referred to in the old records, though their own name for themselves, *Mon*, is much preferred. Some early records referred to them as *Peguans*.



and tracts to read and to learn. After serious study, frequent consultations, and deep thinking, Nai Ta became a Christian and was baptized on the 9th of May 1869. Three women were baptized at the same time and this was the first group of Christians at the village of Kamawet. Nai Ta's example was followed by a number of his disciples who came out in the face of fierce opposition.

Nai Ta spared no pains until he brought all his children to Christ. When he began to preach to his neighbours, the Buddhists there warned him with strong words. At that time when matches and lighters were rare, he was refused light for a fire from all the houses in the village. Wells were also closed against him. He was regarded as an outcast. But he never gave up hope of the day when Mon Christians would multiply.

As an ex-priest, Nai Ta preached with success, using rhymes and poems he had composed. He wrote about thirty poems which are still being used by some present-day Mon preachers. He translated several Mon hymns which are still sung today. When he prayed, he could draw the hearts of people to lay before God and no one would ever get tired of his prayers.

**Evangelism and Expansion.** Rev. J. R. Haswell, the son, started work in Kamawet and in that same year the first Mon church outside of Moulmein was organized with Akya Nai Reuben as pastor. Working with him was a school teacher, Nai Yan Kin (1797-1882), who insisted that all his relatives send their children to the Christian School.

Nai Aung Min first heard about Christ at Mrs. Wade's zayat at Daing-wun-kwin quarter of Moulmein. After serious discussion and deep thinking, he asked for baptism, and later became a preacher at Amherst. He was ordained on 21st April 1870, and died in 1878.

In the report of the annual meeting of the Tenessarim Mon-Burmese Baptist Association in 1896, the churches were: Moulmein Mon-Burmese, Amherst Mon, Kamawet Mon, Thaton Shan-Taungthu, Tavoy Burmese, Moulmein Telegu and Tamil. So we find that the Mons have played an important role.

**To Thailand.** In 1895, the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention resolved to send a preacher to the Mons in Thailand. In

May 1896 Akya Nai Leh and his wife Ma Hpet went to Bangkok. While there they baptized twenty people.

In 1897 Dr. E.A. Stevens took a trip to Thailand accompanied by Nai Htaw Thun, Nai Shwe Gyaw and Nai Di. They sold about 500 tracts. On Easter Sunday, with the help of Dr. Adamson and Akya Nai Leh, they organized a Mon church of 25 members in the village of Tapawlon, 10 miles south of Ayuthia, the ancient capital.

Akya Nai Leh returned to Burma in 1901. His son-in-law, Akya Nai Di went and carried on the work till 1905. Reports at that time showed 2 Mon churches in Tapawlon and Bangkok with a total of 40 or 50 members.

**Later Mon Missionaries.** In 1902 Rev. Arthur C. Darrow arrived to be missionary specifically for the Mons. He built a motor boat, "Shurtleff," which accommodated two missionaries and six workers. This boat enabled him to work more effectively in the area.

In 1907, Mr. Darrow opened a Mon students' boarding house in Moulmein with 25 students from different Mon churches. The students attended the A. B. M. Boys' Middle School and were taught Mon; some turned out to be leading Mon Christians.

Mr. Darrow was a great builder, and, using native stones, made beautiful and substantial buildings and covered walks and steps which are still in use. He built the hospital and the beautiful Mon church in Moulmein. He had dreams of a trade school to train boys for industrial leadership, and even had the jungle cleared and made bricks for the building, but the then Government was not in favour of the project.

In 1914, the English Disciples Mission handed over their mission compound and building at Ye to the Baptists. As Rev. and Mrs. Robert Halliday had been rendering the same kind of service as Baptist missionaries to the Mons, they joined the Baptist Mission. Rev. Halliday, a Mon scholar, compiled the Mon-English dictionary, recently reprinted by the Government of Burma. He visited the Mon areas even to remote places to preach the Gospel. He was completely loyal to the Mons and their culture. The British Government conferred on him the



title of Kaiser-i-Hind with a medal for his outstanding service.

In 1932 Mr. Darrow left Burma because of ill health. Mr. Halliday died of jaundice in Moulmein on the 1st July, 1933, and Rev. Nai Chit Pyu took charge of the Mon mission.

Miss Selma Martha Maxville, R. M. N., arrived on the Mon field as a new missionary in 1916. She learned to speak Mon and gave as much time as she could to Mon work while she was matron of the Ellen Mitchell Memorial Hospital. She will always be best remembered by Mon Christians and non-Christians for her wise counsel and loving kindness and care for the sick and the needy. In 1940 Miss Maxville was released from hospital work and, according to the long-held dream, she opened a village dispensary at Kamawet. (See page 241.)

**Mon Association.** At the annual meeting of the Tenasserim Mon-Burmese Association held in 1907, it was decided that the Mon brethren should be allowed to form their own separate Association. Therefore, the first annual Mon Baptist Association was held in Moulmein on the 20-21st February 1908. The constituent churches were: Moulmein Mon, Kamawet, Mudon, and Kalawthot with a total of 310 members, 3 unordained and 4 ordained pastors and 1 Bible woman. Rev. Darrow and Mon helpers continued their strong evangelistic work and 800 people were baptized in 20 years and more churches organized.

In 1916 two Mon preachers, Akya Nai Po Sin and Akya Nai Lauk, with their families, were sent to Ye, but the work there was not fruitful. So they came back to work in Kamawet and Kalawthot. The mission building in Ye was dismantled and brought to Mudon and rebuilt and used by Rev. Akya Chit Pyu till he retired. The house was later used by the Mon Bible School.

Nai Chit Pyu was born in a Buddhist family. His mother died when he was still young. His Christian uncle, Akya Nai Shwe Lin, put him in the Henzada Mission School. Nai Chit Pyu joined Baptist College and passed the First of Arts. He became a Christian and went to teach in Judson Boys' High School in Moulmein. He also passed the Higher Grade Teacher's examination.

In 1920 Nai Chit Pyu gave up his job as teacher in Judson Boys' High School and sacrificed a good salary to give all his time and strength to evangelistic work among his own people.

His father was still a Buddhist and Nai Chit Pyu was very anxious to win his relatives to Christ. He tried to change his father, who was so "hard-headed" that his uncles told him to give up. But, with tears, he kept on preaching to his family until his father, step-mother, and all his brothers and sisters were won to Christ.

**Thank Offering.** In 1913 the Mons raised Rs. 10,000 and bought land for the mission hospital and gave it to the mission as part of the Judson Centennial Celebrations as a thank offering to God for the Gospel. This was indeed a generous gift, and the Christian hospital still stands on that commanding site. (See page 241.)

**Japanese Occupation.** The war and the Japanese occupation time was so hard that no one would like to recall it. One missionary who came back to Burma after the war said that after hearing all kinds of trials and tortures the Japanese gave, he was much surprised and thankful to God to see that the Christians in Burma had been faithful.

On the 8th of April 1945, Rev. Akya Aung Baw (pastor of Kamawet), Mr. Herald Devine, Akya Nai Pyin (alias Akya Hla Gyaw, school teacher in Kamawet), Akya Nai Pyon Cho (pastor of Pa-nga), Nai Ba Han (a rice miller from Pa-nga), and Akya Nai Ohn Pe (pastor of Moulmein Mon Church) were all arrested by the Japanese on suspicion of allegiance to the Allies and of storing provisions and arms for them. They were put in prison and were questioned day after day with tortures. Rev. Akya Nai Aung Baw died after 12 days. Mr. Harold Devine died on the major bombing day of the Allies on the 29th May.

The bombing broke one of the walls of the prison and enabled Nai Pyon Cho, Akya Nai Ohn Pe, and Akya Nai Hla Gyaw to escape to freedom. Nai Ba Han could not run away because he had had one foot amputated and had been using crutches. He was set free only after the Japanese surrendered.



**Post War.** After World War II, Miss Maxville returned to her work in Kamawet village. In this early post-war period, clothing was a major problem in the country and Miss Maxville did her best to clothe any one who came her way. Even after the insurrection started, when travelling in the districts was not safe, nothing could stop her from helping the sick to reach the hospital in town. Unexpectedly, she was kidnapped for ransom. Mon villagers made an attempt to rescue her and gave their lives in the attempt, but she herself was killed, on the 23rd February 1950. (See page 244.)

In the post-war period when the time came that our churches' organizations needed to be registered legally so the mission properties could be transferred to them, the Mon churches began to draw up a constitution as required. On the 12th December of 1952, the Mon Baptist Churches Union was registered under the Societies Registration Act of Burma. Then in 1954 the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society gave its property at Mudon to the Mon Baptist Churches Union as one of the first transfers.

The Mon Christians felt the need for better trained leaders, so in June 1959 the Mon Bible School was opened in Mudon with eleven pupils under the able leadership of Daw Tin May, B. Th., with four part-time workers.

The prolonged insurrections and insecurity in the villages have made it difficult to carry on any vigorous evangelistic program in the Mon rural areas, but the Christian work grows steadily among the half million Mons who still use their own language.

Nai Ba Shin became Secretary of the Mon Baptist Churches Union in 1956 and served till 1962, when he became Associate Secretary of the Burma Baptist Convention. Rev. Nai Shwe Ngai took his place as Mon Secretary.

**Conclusion.** Many Mons in the cities are at home in the Burmese language. But the people in villages still use Burmese very little and so Mon has to be used to reach them.

The latest statistics show 9 churches, with over 900 members, 4 ordained and 5 unordained pastors and workers.

## 30 Baptist English Church Work in Burma

by Rev. Lloyd G. James.

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**T**O SET THE BEGINNING of American Baptist English church work in Burma may depend on one's interpretation of what constitutes a church. Some may say it started on September 20, 1813, in Rangoon, when the Judsons observed their first Communion together in their home after having been in Burma only a little more than three months, (1883 Judson 76). Others may say it started sometime before May 27, 1821, when the Judsons wrote:

"A very busy day. A few Europeans attended English service in the morning..." (1823 Judson 249). Still others might say it was in March of 1829 with the baptism of three English soldiers in Moulmein.

The English work in its beginning was an "additional duty" to meet the needs of those who wished to worship in the English language, and came to be an outlet of service for missionaries learning the Burmese language. The attitude of the early mission towards the English work is shown in Judson's letter to the Boards:

"It may be well for a new brother to take his turn for a few months at the English chapel, while acquiring the rudiments of the language; but it pains me to see a brother, who has been here above a year, wholly absorbed in the concern, and evidently determined never to leave it, when there are so many openings for missionary labors among the heathen on every side." (1853 b Wayland 63).



Nevertheless, some of the early missionaries, including Judson, Boardman, Wade, Jones, and Kincaid, enjoyed very fine success in their work among the English-speaking community. By 1833 a total of 153 "foreigners" had been baptized in Moulmein, Tavoy, and Rangoon, mostly Europeans. (1853 b Wayland 60).

**Why English Churches?** Two factors were responsible for the development of an English work in Burma. One was the increase in the number of foreign personnel coming to Burma with British control of the land, and the growth of the Eurasian community. Furthermore, the educational system, both in government schools and private mission schools, resulted in a comparatively high percentage of Burmese citizens who could worship in English.

The desire for worship in the English language has expressed itself in two forms. The first was services in English held in vernacular churches as an additional service on Sunday, not usually forming organized churches. The second form was organized churches formed for the purpose of worship and service in English, with accompanying training schools.

In the first category, services in English have been held in vernacular churches, most notably in Mandalay, Tavoy, Taunggyi and Maymyo, and these continue today with the exception of the one in Mandalay.

In the second category are three churches. The first is the church at Moulmein, doubtless the successor to the church in the British 45th Regiment referred to by Judson on March 22, 1829, when he recorded:

"Three English soldiers followed their Lord and Master into the watery grave. They have been in the habit of attending evening meetings. These soldiers we have not received into the Moulmein church, but have recognized them to be the Baptist Church in his Majesty's 45th Regiment." (1853 a Wayland 378).

The church had the aid of Colonel Maingy of the Regiment who, in the absence of an Anglican Church, invited the American missionaries to give spiritual help to the soldiers. Kincaid was

especially successful there, and by the end of 1831 Judson recorded that Kincaid was "baptizing every Lord's day," and the church numbered one hundred (1853 b Wayland 8). The church through the years has developed many fine lay people who have assisted in work in other parts of Burma and around the world. Most have now passed away or have moved to other locations in Burma or out of Burma. After the war it seemed there were not sufficient members to start the work and rebuild the destroyed church in Moulmein but chiefly through the untiring efforts of George Collingwood Targett and his sister, Mrs. Beatrice Danson, a lovely new building has been erected and services in English are again being held under the new name of Ebenezer Baptist Church.

**Immanuel Baptist Church.** The largest and most active English church today is the *Immanuel Baptist Church* in the center of Rangoon. Though Judson records services in English for the few Europeans in Rangoon in 1821, it was not until 1855, after Pegu Province had passed into the hands of the British, that an organized church was founded with worship services in English. A grant of land was secured in 1854 on Merchant Street near the present Press Building and a chapel built. Services were conducted in English, Burmese, Telugu and Tamil. Rev. E.A. Stevens was apparently the first pastor until 1865. In 1882 the present site on the corner of Barr Street and Dalhousie was secured, and a new building was completed in 1885. In this fruitful period the members of the church contributed generously towards the cost of the new church and paid part of the salary of its pastor, Rev. L. J. Denchfield. An unhappy period started in 1888, under the pastorate of Rev. Whitman, with a split of some members, forming the English Baptist Church and securing ministers from England and others remaining with the Baptist Missionary Union. Out of this split the present Immanuel Baptist Church was formed in 1896. The English Church group secured a site and building on the corner of Judah Ezekiel and Bigandet Streets, and continued to worship until 1938 when they again united with the Immanuel Church. In the meantime, the Immanuel Church had continued to grow in strength and in 1935 became entirely self-supporting, until the



war years. Since then it has again had to rely partly on the American Boards for its pastors' salaries. A beautiful new building has replaced the old one destroyed during the war, and congregations of Telugus, Karens, and Chinese were invited to use the building for their churches as well, making some 14 services being held in different parts of the building every Sunday. The busy English church of 445 members continues to be a model in organization for other churches in Burma.

**The College Church.** The third church with English services was the church at the Baptist College, formed July 29, 1892 on the St. John's Road site. This served the students and faculty of the Baptist College. The earliest pastor was Dr. D.C. Gilmore. Since then, various faculty members served as pastors and many had a real influence on students who later became leaders of Burma. It has been also an evangelizing church, and, in one period from 1905 to 1909, seventy-five students were baptized. When the college moved out to the University Estate in 1929, a fine new chapel was built in 1932 at the cost of approximately \$100,000. A good portion of this was raised from local sources. The first Burmese pastor is U Ba Hmyin. Although Judson College no longer exists, we still have an unusual opportunity with a church and chaplain resident on the campus, and with a student center across the main road.

**English Schools.** Before World War II, Baptists had two English-speaking schools, English Girls' School in Moulmein and the Baptist European High School in Rangoon. Neither of these was reopened after the war, but their fine influence is still felt as their old students render good service in the country. An excellent large high school in English is still carried on in Rangoon by the Methodists.

The number of English people has dwindled greatly since Burma's Independence, but English-speaking congregations and schools draw from many racial groups and are therefore working examples of inter-racial unity within the Christian church.

## 31 Work Among Indians In Burma

by Genevieve Sowards

Using a Paper by Rev. Augustine Moses and  
"Our Baptist Heritage" by Rev. E. E. Sowards

**B**APTIST WORK among people from India in Burma probably began with the Judsons. When Ann Judson was in India on her way back to Burma in 1823 from her only furlough in America, she brought a Bengali cook named Koo-chil to Burma with her. He was a Muslim who became devoted to the family, and, during the terrible days in Ava, he helped Ann far beyond the line of duty. But it was not till many years later, October 1835, that he became a Christian and was baptized by Judson in Moulmein. (See page 128.)

### *An Indian family*





After the Mission was moved to Moulmein in 1827, into the territory that had become part of British India, the records begin to tell of Indian converts. On July 28, 1828 an Indian named McDonald (1853a Wayland 365) was baptized by Judson, and three more Indian converts were baptized the same year. Writing in November 1829, Judson said that there were six Indian converts. Because they could not join understandably in the worship services of either Burmese or English, these Indian Christians were set aside as a distinct church. (1853a Wayland 386). Thus the Indian church in Moulmein is the oldest Indian Baptist Church in Burma, dating from 1829 and is still in existence today.

**Flood of Indian Immigrants.** When Lower Burma became part of British India, there were no restrictions on immigration from other provinces of India and so large numbers of Indians of several kinds came to Burma seeking work and better fortunes.

**Unofficial Worker.** As often happens to God's glory, Christian workers rise up in unexpected places.

In 1857 an Indian, Dass Anthravady, (1878 Annual Report Rangoon Missionary Soc. 15-16) came to Rangoon with his regiment. The eminent Christian soldier, General J. Bell, for some time, spent two hours every Sunday teaching him the Bible. Anthravady was deeply inspired to witness for Christ in the regiment and anywhere he could. He started a Bible class with singing and prayer from nine to eleven o'clock every night. New converts and deepened spiritual life came out of these midnight prayer meetings. These converts were received into the English church at first. Many years later in 1880 the separate Telugu and Tamil church of 110 members was established. (1880 Annual Report Rangoon Mission Soc. 14).

The digging of the Suez Canal in 1869 greatly increased the market for Burma rice in Europe, and thousands of Indians came to Burma to help at clearing new paddy fields and to work in loading ocean-going vessels. Many came too as shopkeepers, money-lenders, policemen, clerks in government and other offices, professionals. There were many kinds of Indians with different languages, religions, and social backgrounds.



Missionaries came in contact with Telugus and Tamils more because many of these Indians were cooks, and other helpers, doctors, and teachers. Missionaries recognized the religious needs of Indians in their respective fields and did what they could for them. Many Indian converts became members of Burmese and Karen churches, but we have no records of how many.

**First Missionaries.** About 1884 Rev. and Mrs. W.H. Armstrong came to Moulmein from India for both English and Indian work. (1926 Hughes 118). They asked to be relieved of the English work that they might give full time to the Indians in Moulmein, and in other parts of Burma as well. They were therefore the first Indian missionaries in Burma. Soon the Rangoon Indian church had 50 members. Mrs. Armstrong had a school of about 30 Tamil children in her own home. There are still many grandparents living today who happily recollect the sacrificial work done by these early pioneers. In 1893 a daughter, Miss Kate Armstrong, came to Rangoon and gave full time to Indian work. Their son, Rev. Ernest Armstrong, continued their work till 1919. In 1919 all the Armstrongs were in Burma in Indian work. (1921 Safford 49, 93, 95).

**Schools.** Rev. Levi J. Denchfield, pastor of the English church in Rangoon 1882-1887, took an interest in the Indian work, too, and opened a school for Tamil and Telugu children, Union Hall School, located in the heart of the city of Rangoon near the Secretariat or Government center. In 1892 the Government encouraged kindergartens and so Miss Kate Armstrong started a kindergarten of 50 children with two trained teachers. (1921 Safford 49, 93-96).

In 1900 Union Hall School had about 500 students enrolled with a good staff of teachers. In 1924 it became a full Anglo-Vernacular High School. (1926 Hughes 121) This School has sent out splendid leaders, including Rev. Augustine Moses, co-author of this paper, Dr. V.E. Devadutt of Colgate Rochester Divinity School in America, Mr. B.N. Moorthy, who holds a high position in the Government of India. This school was closed due to Japanese invasion and did not re-open.

In a report of 1928, seven Baptist Mission schools for Indians are listed. (1921 Safford 49)

The Mizpah Hall High School in Moulmein had good buildings and equipment (1926 Hughes 121), but was not re-opened after the Second World War. In 1960 the local Telugu Baptist Church was permitted to use the shell of the old Baptist Press building for a primary school. Although it has little equipment and largely unqualified teachers, it seems to be meeting a need in the local community. Its future is as yet uncertain as neither the local Indian church nor the Indian Convention has resources to bring the school up to standard. Pastor T. Lazarus and Mr. N. Gabriel are supplying the present leadership.

After World War II, when the system of grants-in-aid to schools was discontinued and missionary personnel was greatly reduced, the Mission did not re-open the Indian schools.

Private schools were started to meet the need. Mrs. R.J. Moses has a school in Rangoon of over 900 pupils, using a Methodist church building. Saya Y. Judson, an outstanding teacher and interpreter, has a school in Insein not limited to Indians.

There are State Schools, but many parents like Christian atmosphere, and some schools, like Mrs. Moses', teach Indian children to read and write their own language.

**Indian Churches and Convention.** Many of the Indians in Burma formerly were immigrants, and this shifting population has made it difficult to build permanent church congregations. Often Indian laborers left their families in India.

Besides Baptist churches in Moulmein and Rangoon, Indian churches and groups of Indian Christians have been located in Mergui, Tavoy, Pegu, Maymyo, Myaungmya, Bassein, and Prome. Smaller groups worship in Burmese and Karen churches. The Immanuel Telugu Baptist Church in Rangoon is the largest. In 1929 the Tamil Baptist Church was organized in Rangoon and its present pastor is Rev. Augustine Moses.

In 1924 the Burma Baptist Indian Convention was organized with ten churches, and later became part of the Burma Baptist Convention. It now has only eight churches and some of them are very small.



**Missionaries.** Rev. and Mrs. Will H. Duff were missionaries to the Indians in Burma from 1919-1925, Dr. and Mrs. H. F. Meyers 1925-28, Dr. and Mrs. H. O. Wyatt 1932-38. Many other missionaries have helped Indians, and a couple has usually been assigned to give part time to this work, when a full time missionary was not available. Some of these have been Rev. and Mrs. E.C. Brush (formerly missionaries in India), Rev. and Mrs. Addison Eastman, Rev. and Mrs. Harold Schock, and at present Mr. and Mrs. F.G. Dickason.

**Indian Leaders.** Among many fine Indian pastors and leaders, only a two can be mentioned:

Rev. M. Noble, pastor of Immanuel Telugu and Tamil Church in Rangoon gave over 40 years service. (1921 Safford 119).

Rev. R.J. Moses, head-master of Union Hall School, later went to USA, was pastor Tamil Church, Rangoon, and president of the Indian Convention at his death in 1951.

**The Indian Convention Today.** Since World War II the Indian population in Burma has been greatly decreased. In the Burma Indian Baptist Convention, there are now only eight active churches, with full or part-time pastors. The total membership is only about 600. Only the Tamil Baptist Church in Rangoon is fully self-supporting.

Indian work has its own problems—different Indian languages and customs, high illiteracy, low income of many, scarcity of trained leaders, little literature in Indian languages produced in Burma. Indians are now legally foreigners and thus come under strict regulations. Some have become Burma nationals, and many have lived all their lives in Burma and consider Burma their home, but most of them hold to their own dialects.

Yet there are hundreds of thousands of Indians in Burma. Evangelistic opportunities should not be neglected, and local churches should take care of the Indians in their areas.

## 32 Baptist Work Among Karens

by U Zan and Erville E. Sowards

**U** ZAN'S *History of Baptist Work Among the Sgaw Karens* and two of his other papers have proved very useful in the preparation of this chapter. Another important source of material has been C.H. Carpenter's *Self-Support Illustrated in the History of the Bassein Karen Mission from 1840 to 1880*.

Erville E. Sowards was stationed on the Sgaw Karen field in Bassein from 1922 to 1932 and again from 1946 to 1952 so that he has been able to write from first hand knowledge of this largest of Baptist groups in Burma.

### *Karen Village Scene in Lower Burma*





**Who Are the Karens?** Karens are the most numerous minority group in Burma, numbering about 2,000,000 or more, speaking seventeen dialects which differ structurally and otherwise from Burmese. The three main branches are Sgaws, Pwos, and Pa-Os, with fourteen smaller groups, as Bwes, Pakus, Red Karens, and Padaungs. Fortunately for the Christian literature program, most of the smaller groups are willing to make use of material published in Sgaw Karen.

Karens live in both the plains and hills of the lower and middle sections of Burma, from Mergui up into the Southern Shan States, and from the Arakan coast and the Irrawaddy delta to the Thai border and beyond. Thus they are widely scattered, and Karen villages are in the same areas as Burmese and Mon villages in much of Lower Burma, and Shan and other hill tribes farther north. Only in the Karen Hills east of Toungoo and nearby areas is the population predominantly Karen.

**Folk-Lore of the Lost Book - Preparation for the Gospel.** An account of Christianity among the Karens must include a reference to their traditions which prepared them in a remarkable way for the acceptance of the Gospel in large numbers. Since Karens had no system of writing in general use, these traditions were handed down orally from one generation to another in the form of poetic couplets. Their origin is not known, but they are in many parts so similar to Old Testament sections that some scholars think the ancestors of the Karens must have had contacts with Jewish groups in western China before they migrated into Burma centuries ago.

These traditions have local variations, but agree in the main in recognizing a Creator, Eternal God, Ywa, who is Father of mankind. The Karen, the elder brother, lost the precious Book of Life given to him by Ywa, and consequently sank lower and lower into ignorance and misery. The youngest brother, the white man, took his book and went away, but traditions prophesied that he would sometime return and share his Book of Life with his elder brother, the Karen, who would be saved from his miserable condition if he obeyed the restored Lost Book. Several other peoples in Burma have similar traditions of the Lost Book,

and these have been an important factor in their evangelization. The missionary with the Bible, the Word of God, was recognized as the younger white brother who was willing to share his Book of Life with the Karen. ( see page 69)

**Karen Baptist History Continued from Book I.** Chapters 10, 12, 13, 19, and 20 in Book I tell of the early developments of Christian work among the Karens in various fields. This chapter will continue the history to the present time, deal with general characteristics of the Karen work, and close with the latest statistics available.

**Situation in 1942.** By 1928 when Karen Christians celebrated the centennial of Ko Tha Byu's baptism, their numbers had reached nearly 70,000 churchmembers, and they had about 700 schools. Most of these were village primary schools, but every Karen field had a good central boarding school, most of them high schools. Karen students thronged Judson College, the Normal School and other special schools to prepare for better service to their people and country.

The continued development of trained leadership on Karen fields, and the steadily decreasing number of missionaries led to the turning over of responsibility to Karen leaders. In 1923 Thra San Baw took the general evangelistic work of the Tharrawaddy field when Rev. and Mrs. Lee Lewis left on furlough. In 1927 Thra Kra Su at Loikaw assumed the work there when Rev. and Mrs. George E. Blackwell went home. In 1931 Thra San Ba and Sir San C. Po, the "layman missionary," took over from Rev. and Mrs. E.E. Sowards, successors of the veteran Dr. C. A. Nichols, on the Bassein-Myaungmya Sgaw Karen field.

By the close of 1941 only one Karen field had a missionary family, Rev. and Mrs. Chester L. Klein on the Toungoo Bwe field. Rev. and Mrs. Harry I. Marshall lived on the Paku compound, but were engaged mostly in literary work. Misses Hattie Petheram and Alicia Bishop were at Nyaunglebin, and Miss Cecilia Johnson at Tharrawaddy. The Tavoy, Moulmein, Rangoon, Bassein, Henzada, Shwegyin, and Loikaw Karen fields had no resident missionaries. Generally speaking, Karen Christians wanted missionary help, and accepted the new responsibilities because



no other course was offered. By 1942 the great majority of the Karen Baptist churches had reached the three goals of missionary effort: being self-supporting, self-directing, and self-propagating.

**Twenty Years of Testing, 1942-1962.** World War II and the Japanese occupation of Burma brought disruption. The period in 1942 between the withdrawal of the British and the setting up of an effective government by the Japanese saw the burning of many Christian Karen villages, and looting of churches and homes. Some Christians suffered martyrdom, schools were closed, and many religious activities could not be carried on. Thra San Ba was one of the many killed in air raids.

From 1942 to the end of the war, life was difficult for Karen Christians. The Japanese suspected them of pro-Ally activities, and leaders were imprisoned and sometimes tortured. The Karen compounds became "enemy property" because the legal titles were held by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Church and school buildings taken over by the Japanese military authorities became targets for Allied air raids from India. The Bassein Pwo and Toungoo Bwe and Paku compounds suffered heavy damage. All buildings deteriorated because repairs could not be kept up. Shortages of medicine, clothing, and bedding caused hardships and sometimes death, especially of children. Yet though scattered and deprived of their leaders, Christians continued as much of their work as conditions permitted. When peace came, teachers and other Christian Karen leaders labored sacrificially to re-open their schools and churches, sometimes in temporary quarters. Major repairs to damaged buildings were delayed by shortage of materials and funds, but some was done.

**Insurrections Following Independence.** Hardly had the work of reconstruction started, when the outbreak of the insurrections after independence in 1948 again disrupted Burma. Many Karen churches were in territory controlled by Red Flag or White Flag Communist or Army and Union Military Police deserters. Communications were uncertain, and Christian work in many areas was greatly hindered.

But the greatest blow to the Karen Christian work came when the Karen Insurrection broke out in 1949. The great Sgaw Karen

compound in Bassein, one of the outstanding mission stations of the world, was completely destroyed and then occupied by squatters. Both the Bwe and the Paku compounds in Toungoo were much damaged and occupied. The compound at Loikaw was destroyed. The theological schools on Seminary Hill suffered heavy losses. More than three hundred Christian Karen villages were burned and the people scattered. Unburned villages were crowded with refugees. Epidemics such as smallpox, broke out, and medicines were almost unobtainable. Thousands of Karen Christians lost homes, property, savings, and income. Annual meetings could not be held, or perhaps held with only small representation.

The losses of buildings and equipment for the Christian program were terrific—damage was about two million rupees on the Sgaw Karen compounds in Bassein alone. It was indeed a time of testing, but Karen Christians kept their faith and helped each other. Burmese Christian neighbors rendered great help through those trying times, especially in Rangoon and Bassein.

**Improved Conditions.** As the Union Government gradually regained control over more territory and communications improved, life slowly became more normal in many Christian Karen areas. In 1959 the Caretaker Government evicted squatters, restored compounds to legal owners, or provided temporary substitutes, and the Christian work took on new life. Many village sites were re-occupied, chapels rebuilt and schools reopened. Repairs were made to the Karen Theological Seminary and Karen Women's Bible School buildings, and new structures erected, especially the beautiful Centennial Memorial, commemorating the first hundred years of the Karen Seminary. Immediately upon regaining their compound in 1959 the Bassein Sgaw Karens began the work of reconstruction, and are giving sacrificially to replace the forty buildings destroyed in 1949. More than thirty wooden structures are built, and work is proceeding on the new brick church.

Karen Christians had twenty years of severe testing, and suffered great losses, but came through with strengthened faith and resolution to continue and improve that part of the work of



Christ's Kingdom entrusted to them. Their faith and courage through these trying years are an inspiring part of Burma history.

### A Study Of The Karen Work

As we read the records of the 135 years of Baptist work among the Karens, certain facts and phases are evident. This section will deal briefly with some of them.

**Karen Converts Won Largely by Karen Workers.** Although the American missionary played a vital role in the development of Christianity among the Karens, Karen workers were chiefly responsible for the large numbers of converts. Ko Tha Byu gave himself with unstinted zeal to the winning of his people. Boardman wrote of him, "If Karens were accessible, no fatigue, no obstacles would prevent his seeking them out." (Francis Mason, *Memoir of Ko Tha Byu*, Tavoy 1843, page 67.) He took the Gospel to Karen villages on the Tavoy, Moulmein, Rangoon, and Arakan fields until his death on September 9, 1840. Since Ko Tha Byu was not ordained, others baptized the converts he won.

On the Bassein field, where the missionaries could not reside until 1852, Thras Myat Kyaw and Tway Po were the first Karen pastors ordained, in January 1843. Within two years Myat Kyaw had baptized more than 2,000 converts and Tway Po had almost equalled that number. (Robert G. Torbet, *Venture of Faith*, page 70.) This was more than any missionary then in Burma baptized in a lifetime. (See page 111.)

On the Toungoo field, the Masons arrived in October 1853 but had to leave for the United States within three months. Saw Quala (Kwa La) and two helpers arrived from Tavoy in December 1853, and baptized 741 the first year and 2,022 by the end of 1855. (*Missionary Jubilee*, page 209.) By the time the Masons returned in January 1857, there were thirty churches with 2,124 members. (See page 186 f.)

While these are the outstanding examples, the same situation has been generally true on all Karen fields: Karen pastors and evangelists, rather than the foreign missionaries directly, have won their people to Christ.

**Self-Support in Karen Churches.** Karen Christians have made a record for self-support seldom—if ever—equalled in the history of modern missions. Before 1845 Tavoy Christians were building their village chapels and schools. Conditions on the Rangoon and Bassein fields between 1833 and 1852, when missionaries had to carry on from Moulmein and Sandoway, threw Karen workers and churches largely upon their own initiative and resources. Thus self-support was the general practice from the beginning, and the missionaries fostered it. The two fields too were fortunate in having a succession of missionaries who followed the same policy, while on other fields the policy sometimes changed with new missionaries.

Undoubtedly the policy of encouraging self-support was a strong factor in developing the spiritual vigor of Karen Baptist churches. However, the much larger number of Karen Christians made self-support easier with them than with the Burmese and Mons among whom Christians were few and scattered. These widely different circumstances must be kept in mind when making comparisons in the matter of self-support. (See page 172.)

**Karens' Thirst for Knowledge.** For centuries Karens had been illiterate and sunk in ignorance, superstition, and poverty because of conditions beyond their control. When the Lost Book of God's Word was brought back by the younger brother, the white missionary, Karen Christians were determined to be able to read it for themselves, and to secure for their children educational advantages long denied them. They were willing to make sacrifices to support teachers and schools, so that the village school became as common as the village church. On the Tavoy field new Christians were required to learn to read. (Torbet, *Venture of Faith*, page 66.) In 1844 Abbott wrote in Sandoway, "My time is entirely devoted to my boarding school,—the two pastors, fourteen native preachers, several young men preparing for school teachers—to the number of fifty...To educate a native ministry I now consider the most important department of the Karen Mission." (Carpenter, *Self-Support in Bassein*, page 93.) His successor, John Sidney Beecher, too, pleaded the necessity of educational work and a normal class to train village teachers.



*Self-Support in Bassein*, page 115.) (See Book I, p. 171.)

The eagerness of Karen Christians for schools for their children, the wisdom of the mission in helping to train pastors and teachers, and the policy of the British government in giving grants-in-aid to qualified private schools, resulted in a system of hundreds of Christian village schools on Karen fields. The Bassein Sgaw Karens had about 150 such schools and the Rangoon field about as many. These schools, usually held in the village church, frequently had the pastor as teacher or manager.

But the village school was seldom above the primary grade and Karen Christians saw that, as one pastor expressed it, "Young men who study only in the village schools do not amount to much." (*Self-Support in Bassein*, page 245.) They pressed for schools in town of higher grade in which their children could obtain much better education, and they were willing to pay for them, and to help children from the remotest villages have the same opportunities as children in the towns.

Thus every Karen field in time developed a central boarding school in which Karen young people could go farther in their studies. We cannot estimate the contribution to the progress of the work of the Kingdom made by these central schools in Tavoy, Moulmein, Rangoon, Bassein, Henzada, Tharrawaddy, Shwegyin, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Loikaw. Some of them are well past their centennial anniversaries, and are still rendering valuable service to the Christian program and to the whole country.

Christian Karens are mostly farmers and not a wealthy people, but they have put millions of rupees and kyats into their schools instead of into personal adornment and status symbols. The many buildings on the compounds of the Karen schools were usually paid for by Karen churchmembers, with the help of the grants-in-aid from the government, and with only a small part, if any, from the mission. It is to the credit of Karen Christians that they gave generously for buildings on land to which the Foreign Mission Society held the title.

The investment in schools has lifted the entire community to heights undreamed of a century and a half ago. Deserved tribute should be paid to devoted Christian Karen teachers, men and

women, who in sacrificial service on low salaries, have kept Christian Karen schools in operation through difficulties and dangers which would have daunted most people. Scores of missionary wives and single ladies have done most valuable service in Karen Christian schools from their very beginning.

**Karen Christian Literature: The Mission Meets A Challenge.** In the early years of the mission, the Burmese and Mon converts were mostly literate and educated in their own culture, and had a rich literature accumulated over centuries. When the illiterate Karens began to come in, the mission faced a difficult problem, and their large numbers made it more urgent. These new converts were determined to become a literate people to be able to read and interpret for themselves the Book of Life. It is interesting and encouraging to see how the mission measured up to the great challenge.

Rev. Jonathan Wade had been in Burma eight years and was fluent in Burmese when he baptized the first Karen converts on the Moulmein field in February 1831. When Karens pleaded for the Book of Life in their own language, Wade dedicated himself to giving it to them, and although in poor health, he accomplished much before leaving Burma a few months later. Since Sgaw Karen has no final consonants and every syllable ends in an open vowel sound, it proved easier to reduce to writing than Pwo with its nasals. By February 1832 Wade had hastily made an alphabet for the Sgaw, using chiefly Burmese letters for which type was already available, hoping to revise and improve the system after furlough. However he did so well that little change was made later. The first printing in Sgaw Karen was a tract of six pages and a spelling-book of thirty-three pages in 1832. Karens began to use the new script for writing, and teachers were trained. Saw Quala and Saw Kaw La Paw were sent from Tavoy to Moulmein to learn the new script and to get it started on the Tavoy field.

Rev. Francis Mason, Boardman's successor at Tavoy, began his important translation work into Sgaw Karen, with Saw Quala an excellent assistant. The Wades too went to Tavoy on their return to Burma and it became the center for Karen literary work. When Howard Malcolm visited Tavoy and the Christian village



of Myitta (Matah) in 1836, he reported that Karens had only a manuscript copy of the Gospel of Matthew, and about a hundred hymns translated (but not yet printed). In 1837 Rev. Cephas Bennett went to Tavoy to set up a mission press to print the Christian literature the translators were preparing in Sgaw Karen.

The list of books and pamphlets printed at Tavoy through the next fifteen years is truly impressive. By the time the Tavoy press was transferred to Moulmein in 1855, the number of pages printed had reached the surprising total of 20,933,800, almost all in Sgaw Karen. (*Missionary Jubilee*, page 281.) By the end of 1838, only ten years after the baptism of the first Karen convert, Baptist missionaries had accomplished the following:

The Sgaw Karen language had been reduced to writing, using a system which has required but little revision. The list of books and tracts printed included the *Gospels of Matthew, John, and Luke*; a *Hymn Book* of 320 pages, followed a year later by a *Supplement* also of 320 pages; a *Vade Mecum* or book of Scripture and hymns for family and public worship of 312 pages, and at least nine other items.

By 1843, after only fifteen years, the list of books in Sgaw Karen included the complete *New Testament*, an *Epitome of the Old Testament* of 840 pages, another *Supplement* to the Hymn Book of 128 pages, and even a *Child's Book* of 154 pages.

And in 1853, only twenty-five years after the baptism of Ko Tha Byu, the entire Bible in Sgaw Karen, a volume of 1,040 pages, was published. By that time the list of books available to Karen Christians included such items as a *Church History* of 468 pages, a *Catalogue of Plants*, a *Key to Astronomy*, and school texts from *Infant's Readers* to *Trigonometry*. The monumental *Karen Thesaurus* in four volumes had 3,243 pages. Truly the Mission had measured up to the great challenge, and the growth in numbers and development of the Karen Christian community is due in no small measure to this.

And on their part, Karen Christians made good use of this material. For example, an edition of 2,000 copies of the New Testament was printed in 1843, and a second edition of 4,000 copies in 1851, yet only 74 copies were left on hand in 1853.

In later years the Mission faced similar challenges when Kachins, Northern Chins, and Lahus and Was were converted in thousands, but lack of personnel and other circumstances prevented such response as had been given to the Karens. For example, it was 45 years after the baptism of the first converts before Kachin Christians had the whole Bible in their own language. And over fifty years after the baptism of the first Lahu, Wa, and Zomi Chin converts, these people do not yet have the whole Bible in their own language, and other Christian literature is limited.

**Continued Training of Leaders.** Another important factor in the development of the Karen Christian community has been the continued emphasis upon better training for pastors and leaders, and continued in-service training. In the early years the standards of education for pastors and teachers were necessarily low, but Karen Christians were not satisfied that they should remain so, and worked for their gradual improvement.

In chapters 14 and 24 is given the story of Baptist theological education in Burma. The Karen Theological Seminary, founded in 1845, the Karen Women's Bible School, founded in 1897, and the Burma Divinity School, founded in 1927, have all made valuable contributions to the training of pastors and evangelistic workers. The newer "regional" Bible Schools are also playing their part in providing workers with lower educational qualifications.

The local high schools on Karen fields, and Judson College and the Baptist Normal School and other training classes before 1942 helped to prepare teachers and other leaders in the community. Since independence, the Judson Student Aid Fund and Karen organizations such as Old Students' Associations have helped hundreds of Karen young people secure education.

The number of Karen young people who have obtained higher education outside of Burma—in India, the British Isles, the United States, Australia or New Zealand—is surprising. The Wades in 1832 took with them to the United States a Burman, Maung Shwe Maung, and a Karen, Saw Chet Thaing, to teach language to new missionary appointees. So far as we know, Saw Chet Thaing was the first Karen to go to the United States. Rev.



J. H. Vinton took two Karens with him to America in 1847 to help in translation work. Undoubtedly the travel experiences of these early visitors to foreign countries broadened their outlook.

In 1870 there were nine Karens studying in the United States, from Henzada, Rangoon, Shwegyin, and Bassein. (*Baptist Missionary Magazine*, February 1871, page 62.) In proportion to their numbers, few communities in Burma can compare with the Karen Christians in the quantity and quality of their educated leaders. This is indeed a transformation from their condition when Ko Tha Byu was baptized in 1828.

**In-Service Training.** The annual Pastors' Classes held on almost every Karen field have been another important factor in the continued development of the work. Formerly this class usually was held for a month, with some missionary or prominent national leader teaching. Besides Bible study, time was given to study and discussion of local problems and needs. For the isolated village pastors these annual periods of fellowship, spiritual inspiration, and mental stimulation were most valuable in promoting growth and preventing stagnation. Over weekends, teams of strong pastors visited weak churches nearby, and many discouraged pastors working in difficult places have been strengthened and given new vision.

Another "teaching device" for the in-service training of pastors on Karen fields in Burma is the circular letter. Written by the missionary or national leader in the central station of the local field, these letters were duplicated and sent out to pastors and village leaders throughout the field. Dr. C. A. Nichols made excellent use of such circular letters for many years on the Bassein field, binding the large field into a unified force for carrying on a diversified Christian program.

Miss Cecilia Johnson used circular letters to pastors on the Tharrawaddy field, especially during the troubled years when travel was not practicable. Even long after retirement, with no missionary in Tharrawaddy, Miss Johnson kept up her regular sending of circular letters to village pastors.

Other means too have helped. Some fields have had monthly or quarterly meetings for pastors and church leaders. The May-

myo Bible Assembly, local camps and conferences, annual meetings of the Associations, the Karen Convention, and the Burma Baptist Convention have also served to bring inspiration and help to pastors and workers in isolated places and challenged them to be more effective workers for Christ's Kingdom.

**Evangelistic Zeal of Karen Christians.** From the very beginning of the Christian work among them up to the present time, Karen Christians have shown a zeal and a willingness to sacrifice for the spread of the Good News to others. In 1836 the Rev. Howard Malcolm, sent out by the Board to visit missions in Asia, made a thorough study of the American Baptist work in Burma, going to every station, including Ava, and to Arakan. In his published account, he says of the Karen Christians on the Tavoy field:

"A greater evidence of Christian generosity is seen in their missionary zeal...Assistants or schoolmasters...are ever ready to part with their families, and go wearisome journeys of six months at a time, among distant villages where they are utterly unknown, carrying on their backs tracts and food...and enduring many privations. Young men whose services are very important to their aged parents in clearing jungle and planting paddy are readily spared, and go to various points during the rainy season teaching schools, for which their salary is two or three dollars a month—half what they could earn in other employ. About twenty schoolmasters and assistants are now thus employed. Mr. Mason...baptized many converts, who were brought to the knowledge of the truth by these assistants."

Danger from wild beasts was a real threat, and Mason later reported that two Karen workers on the Tavoy field had been killed by tigers. What Malcolm said of Tavoy Christians was true of the other Karen fields too.

**Missionary Societies in Burma.** As early as 1833 there were Mission Societies in Moulmein and Tavoy. Although not truly indigenous organizations, such Societies set an example for the formation of Home Mission Societies among the Burma churches. An early indigenous Home Mission Society was formed on the Bassein field in 1850, and in 1851 it had several evangelists



out at work. The Rangoon Karen Home Mission Society came into being in 1853, and other Karen fields followed as the work grew. These Societies have continued active through the years, and are still powerful agencies for the building of Christ's Kingdom on the local fields and to the far frontiers of Burma. For while true to the name "Home Mission" the Societies gave attention to the evangelization of their own fields, they did not stop there. Tavoy sent workers to Henzada and Toungoo. The Bassein Society sent workers to Henzada before a mission station was established there in 1854, and six workers to the Toungoo fields in 1856. By 1859 the Karen fields near Toungoo were sending missionaries to the Red Karens far to the east. From such beginnings much has come.

**Karen Workers Among Asho Chins.** Karen Christian workers on the Henzada and Prome fields soon came into contact with Asho Chins and preached to them. Not only did Karen Home Mission Societies send workers among the Ashos, but Asho children were welcomed into Karen schools. When converted, many returned to witness to their own people.

When the strong pleas of Karen missionaries in Henzada finally led to the appointment of Rev. and Mrs. Arthur E. Carson for Asho Chin work, Karen workers helped much from Henzada, Bassein, Sandoway, and Prome. They were especially valuable in starting the work until Asho leaders were trained to carry on.

**Among the Kachins.** Christian work among the Kachins was opened, not by the mission, but by the Bassein Karen Home Mission Society in 1876. When Rev. Cushing planned to open a Shan station in Bhamo, he was invited to come to Bassein and take with him Karen workers to begin work for the Kachins. Chapter 37 on Kachin work gives more information about early Karen workers in that area. Thra Saw Peh (S'Peh) spent years among the Kachins, learned Jinghpaw thoroughly, and served as the pastor of the first Kachin Baptist church.

**Among the Shans.** While Karen evangelists did not work so much among the Buddhist Shans as among the animistic hill tribes, yet several, as Thra Bla Paw and his wife, Thramu Bessie,

at Mongnai, rendered valuable service in Shan churches.

**In the Chin Hills.** When Rev. A. E. Carson opened the new station at Haka in 1899, he was accompanied by Karen workers, chiefly from Henzada and Bassein. Rev. Cope's tribute to them is quoted by Rev. Johnson in chapter 38.

In addition to the Karen evangelistic workers, several Karen Christians in government service, laymen, worked for years in the rugged Chin Hills, moved by the spirit of service to a needy area rather than by desire for easy assignments or for self-advancement. Thra Aung Dwe, who gave many years in the educational service, is one example from many.

**Among the Lahus, Was, and Akhas.** Much can be said about the work of Karen evangelists in the Eastern Shan States, but this quotation from a brief history of the Kengtung Mission written by Rev. J. H. Telford in 1927 (an unpublished typed manuscript) is a good summary:

"A historical sketch of the Kengtung Mission would not be complete if we failed to make mention of the great part the Karen Christian workers have had in the development of the Lahu church...Much of the success...has been largely due to their splendid consecration and complete abandonment to the work. For years the Karen churches of Bassein...have sent evangelists and pastors to the Lahus, for whose financial support the Karen churches have assumed entire responsibility. The services over a period of years by such men as Po Tun, Ba Te, Chit Swe and numerous others, live as a fragrant memory in the hearts of the Lahus..."

The first Akha Baptist church was organized in 1936 as a result of ten years of persistent effort by Thra Tun Gyaw and his wife in spite of difficulties and discouragement. Scores of Karen workers from Lower Burma whose names have not been recorded have left their homes and served in distant places among strange peoples of different customs and language, and have helped to build the church of Christ in the far places of Burma.

**In Thailand.** Burma Karens have long worked among the many Karens who live in Thailand. The Rangoon, Bassein, Moulmein, and Tavoy fields as well as the Burma Baptist Conven-



tion and the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference, have sent workers and financial help to Thailand. The "regional" Bible school at Papun has trained several Thailand Karen workers, and the Karen Seminary at Insein has had students from Thailand.

**Missionary Zeal Still Lives.** The willingness to serve in the extension of Christ's church which Malcolm observed among Karen Christians in 1836 is still alive among Karen Christians today. In 1962 at the graduation ceremonies of the Karen Theological Seminary it was announced that the students who ranked first and second in the graduating class, Saw Aung Sein and Saw Kyaw Tun, had volunteered for service among the Nagas on the far northwestern border, even though no organized group was ready to assume their support.

Karens continue to supply more than their share of the Christian workers in Burma. While Karens make up not quite one-half of the total membership of the Burma Baptist Convention, in 1962-63 two-thirds of the men and three-fourths of the women among the 714 students enrolled in Baptist theological schools in Burma were from the various Karen groups.

**Karen Schools Play Their Part.** Not only have the Karen Christian schools been a most important factor in the development of the Karen Christian community, they have been powerful missionary agencies for the training of leaders for the newer churches on the frontiers of Burma. When there were only primary schools—if any—on new fields, Karen schools in Lower Burma welcomed students from the mission fields, in many cases supported them, and sent them back much better prepared to serve their people. The number of Chin (both Asho and Zomi), Kachin, Shan, Lahu, and Wa children who have obtained better education in Karen schools is impressive. And now Nagachildren are being welcomed and helped. Karen Christians deserve credit for the generosity and kindness with which they have opened their schools to these children speaking strange tongues, in order that they might become more effective co-workers in the building of Christ's Kingdom in Burma and Thailand.

**Karen Christians and Singing.** Truly the Karen Christian can say with the Psalmist: (Psalm 40:1-3).

I waited patiently for the Lord, and he...heard my cry. He brought me up...and he hath put a new song in my mouth.

Pre-Christian Karen music was in a minor key, doleful and sad, as was the life of fear of the evil spirits they thought all around them. Christian Karens have something joyous to sing about, and the hymn book soon became "standard equipment" for a Karen Christian. Even a village church may have three choirs: children's, young people's, and adults'.

At first the songs used were translations of Western hymns made by missionaries, but in time Karen leaders too made translations. The writer was away from Burma from 1932 to 1946, and one of the most noticeable things on his return was the progress Karen village churches had made in adapting Western music to their own way of singing. The Sgaw Karen language with its open vowel sounds is musical, and there are now Karen composers who are adding to truly Karen church music. It is hoped that in time some of the best of these, after translation into the English language, may become part of the great musical heritage of the Christian church.

### Study of A Karen Association

This chapter has dealt largely with general characteristics of the Karen Baptist work, as the fields carry on programs of similar range but varying in extent as determined by the resources and leadership. A more detailed study of a single Karen Association will give a better idea of the present development and future possibilities. The Bassein-Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Baptist Association is chosen because the writer knows it well from residence on the field, correspondence, and frequent visits since 1922 and can thus speak from first-hand knowledge and observation of developments over a period of forty years.

**Size and Location.** The field lies almost entirely in the two districts of Bassein and Myaungmya in the western part of the great Irrawaddy River delta, the lower end of the Arakan Yoma mountain range, and the Arakan seacoast. The area is about 7,000 square miles, mostly in the rich rice lands of the delta, the "rice basket" of Burma.



**Membership.** The present membership of the 195 churches in the Association is about 27,000, by far the largest Baptist Association in Burma. When normal conditions permit travel without difficulty, the attendance at an annual meeting may reach 9,000 persons. For convenience, the whole Association area is divided into nine sections, and the annual meeting is held in each in turn. All the villages of a section work together to lodge and feed the thousands of visitors from three to five days—no small undertaking!

**Full-time Workers.** The Association has a staff of eleven full-time workers: General Secretary, Treasurer, Women's Society Secretary, Youth Secretary, Director of Evangelism, Director of Christian Education, Manager of the bookstore, office clerk, office helper, Rehabilitation Superintendent for the extensive rebuilding program, and a Secretary of the Ko Tha Byu Old Students' Association.

**Home Mission Society.** The Director of Evangelism supervises the fifty evangelistic workers in forty-seven places. In addition, some of the nine section groups have their own evangelists supported by local funds. There are also some "unofficial" groups which raise funds to support missionaries in other fields. One of these has had as many as twenty workers on the Nyaunglebin and Thaton fields.

**Bible Training School.** There are usually about sixty students in the co-educational Ko Tha Byu Bible Training School at Bassein for Christian workers, taking a three-year course taught by four teachers. Some graduates go on to the Karen Seminary at Insein for the fourth year of study, in preparation for home mission and village pastoral work. (see p. 227.)

**Educational Program.** The Association does not maintain any primary schools in Christian villages as these are the responsibility of the local community. The largest item in the annual budget of the Association is the amount for the Ko Tha Byu High School in Bassein, which has an enrollment of over 600 and a staff of more than thirty teachers. This school is one of the oldest continuously operated Baptist schools in Burma. When the Japanese army occupied the school compound in Bassein in

1942, the Trustees and teachers moved the school to temporary quarters in a Karen village across the river and continued when most schools had closed. Again when the compound in Bassein was completely destroyed in 1949, the school was divided into sections and moved out into villages in different areas of the field.

The Association also maintains a middle school in the village of Kaw-lay-lu to serve an area in the southwestern section of the field. A grant of three thousand kyats a year is made to the boarding department (privately managed) of the State Karen school at Yedwinyegan near Myaungmya, to enable children from Association churches to be received there.

A Leadership Training Board raises funds for scholarships for promising Karen young people and helps them secure more advanced training in the University or other higher institutions. It also helps teachers to secure better professional qualifications.

**Medical Work.** The Association supports the Sir San C. Po Memorial Hospital and Nurses' Training Class at Yedwinyegan, a branch hospital at the village of Teguseit, and three Health Centers in different areas of the field at which one or more trained nurses are stationed. (See page 245.)

**Agricultural Program.** At present the Ko Tha Byu Farm on the school compound in Bassein is the Association's main agricultural project, as the Agricultural School and Farm at Yedwinyegan which was started by the Association is now operated by the Burma Baptist Convention. Future plans call for experimental and demonstration farms in different areas of the field, as the seacoast, foothills, and areas where floods create agricultural problems.

**Finances.** To go back in history a bit: in 1850 a Home Mission Society was formed, as Abbott wrote, "to substitute for the mission treasury the native churches themselves and to cast all preachers on these churches for support." In 1854 the grant of six hundred rupees from the mission toward the support of workers was given up. Bassein Karens gave about a thousand rupees to the missionaries who lost all their personal possessions in a fire. They paid the passage back to Burma of Rev. Beecher



when he had resigned from the Missionary Union along with other Karen missionaries in the 1850's. The school paid the writer's salary when he went to Bassein in 1922, and the outfit allowance, travel, and salary when he returned in 1926; also the outfit, travel, and salary of Miss Genevieve Sharp in 1927, and our travel to U.S.A. in 1932. At that time the office of the Association was handling over a hundred thousand rupees a year, but only Rs. 156 came from the mission, to pay taxes and repairs on the two mission residences.

When the writer was Superintendent of the high school, the Trustees said, "Get whatever you think the school needs and we will furnish the money." They kept their word. When he came back to the Bassein field in 1946, the Trustees passed a resolution giving him the authority to "make any expenditure from any of our funds and to obligate future funds."

When this missionary was called back to Bassein after World War II, the mission paid his salary while the field was recovering from war losses and disruption. When the field suffered the terrible losses in 1949, the mission granted Rs. 20,000 a year to help keep the work going. But as soon as the Bassein Karens began to recover, they voluntarily reduced the grant by Rs. 5,000 per year until after 1960 no grant has been taken from the mission.

The Bassein compound was recovered in 1959, swept bare of the buildings erected over nearly a century. When temporary structures were not permitted because of fire hazard, and good buildings were required quickly in order to retain possession of the valuable site, American Baptist churches in the "Crisis in Bassein" World Fellowship Offering in 1959 gave substantial grants for the rehabilitation of all three mission compounds in Bassein. The Sgaw Karens' share was K 176,566 and in addition the Mission Society made a loan of \$20,000. The Karens have raised more than K 400,000 and are still hard at work to complete the building program, besides supporting the regular work of the Association. In 1962 the regular budget of the Association was about K 300,000. This gives an idea of the working of a Karen Association in Burma. The writer is deeply grateful that he has had the privilege of working with such fine Christians so many years.

## The Karen Baptist Convention

Although there has been a good deal of interchange of workers and communications between the different Karen fields from the beginning, a formal organization of all of them is of recent origin. The annual meetings of the Burma Baptist Convention, organized in 1865, gave opportunities for Karens from the different fields to get together informally. However, we now have no records of the early beginnings of a separate Karen Convention. In the *Burma Annual* for 1928, which is also *An Historical Sketch of the Karen Mission 1828-1928*, is the note: "The Karen Conference, now called the Karen Baptist Convention, has for several years carried on mission work of its own in Siam, and bids fair to be the body which will take a constantly increasing part in the life of the churches." (Page 39.)

The Karen Baptist Convention is composed of all the Karen field groups except the Pwos who have their own Pwo Karen Baptist Conference. The Karen Convention has a staff of seven workers, six of whom are full-time: General Secretary, Youth Secretary, Women's Secretary, Director of Christian Education, a cashier-accountant, and a typist. The Treasurer is a retired government official who gives part time. The "Go Forward Press" which publishes the "Go Forward" monthly magazine and other material in Sgaw Karen, is operated by the Karen Convention. The "Go Forward Magazine" is the direct successor of the "Morning Star" started in Tavoy in 1842, and is thus one of the oldest religious periodicals in Asia.

Thra Clifford Kyaw Dwe, the present General Secretary, has kindly furnished the following statistics. As scores of churches were in villages burned in 1949 and after and still scattered, the figures are not complete. It is almost impossible to secure up-to-date statistics from remote villages in areas where travel is difficult or dangerous. Therefore these figures can be considered as very conservative, and the present actual totals may be considerably higher than those given here.



## Karen Baptist Statistics For 1962

### Associations Arranged in Order of Size of Membership

| <i>Name</i>          | <i>Churches</i> | <i>Baptisms</i> | <i>Membership</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Bassein-Myaungmya    | 195             | 421             | 27,083            |
| Rangoon Home Mission | 158             | 656             | 16,686            |
| Moulmein-Thaton      | 49              | 311             | 9,557             |
| Henzada              | 87              | 305             | 9,100             |
| Tavoy-Mergui         | 61              | 208             | 8,069             |
| Toungoo Bwe          | 97              | 255             | 5,015             |
| Toungoo Paku         | 64              | 199             | 4,053             |
| Tharrawaddy-Prome    | 47              | 91              | 3,768             |
| Shwegyin             | 52              | 250             | 3,300             |
| Nyaunglebin          | 27              | 191             | 2,418             |
| Kayah                | 46              | 90              | 2,312             |
| Papun                | 15              | 98              | 1,842             |
| Upper Burma          | 13              | 73              | 827               |
| <b>TOTALS</b>        | <b>911</b>      | <b>3,145</b>    | <b>94,030</b>     |

These churches support 233 ordained and 604 unordained pastors and 320 evangelists, or 1,157 Christian workers in all.

### “And Other Sheep...Not Of This Fold”

Karens tend to be “rugged individualists,” and many factors have been at work through these 135 years. Thus there are some groups of Karen Baptists not affiliated with the Karen Baptist Convention of the Burma Baptist Convention, and not included in the above statistics. The largest is the Self-Supporting Karen Baptist Home Mission Society of about 4,000 members. Altogether, there must be fully 100,000 Karen Baptists who are baptized members of churches, and a Karen Baptist community of probably twice that number, mostly unbaptized children.

There are several thousand Karen Anglicans, and more thousands in the Roman Catholic church in Burma. But all Karen Christians together probably do not exceed one-sixth of the total Karen population in Burma. The unfinished task for the years ahead is great and demands consecration and effort.

## The Look Forward

With only slight changes, part of the conclusion written by Dr. Harry I. Marshall and Mrs. Emma W. Marshall for the survey of the first hundred years of the Karen Baptist work on pages 62-65 of *On the Threshold of the Century*, which is also the *Burma Annual* for 1928, will make a fitting close for this chapter.

The isolation which the past has seen is giving way to a merging together. Instead of that spirit which in the past said that to a Karen "Heaven would be unbearable if there were Burmans there," a new spirit is developing which says, "Without the Burmans and our other neighbors, Heaven would not be complete." Racial feeling is being swallowed up in co-operation, and the slogan of "Burma for Christ" will cross over fences and break down walls of racial feeling and mutual distrust...

Ideals of self-support, of service, and of sacrifice will grow to full flower and can never be over-emphasized. Others such as narrow denominationalism, isolated self-satisfaction, racial pride, and conceited ignorance will disappear. These may give way to other sins, but they cannot long stand the light of progressive thought and leadership... Cannot the Karen of to-morrow pick up the scattered debris of his un-attained ideals and remould them into a new pattern of accomplishments that will lead him on to greater heights of attainment and to a fuller and more glorious life? With the attainment of these ideals, he will have a great contribution to make to Burma. Not with arms, not with political domination, will the Karen make himself a power in his land. But by those spiritual contributions of character, industry, and patience will he help the general welfare of his country. By losing his life in the greater life of the land will he find it.



## 33 The Pwo Karen Churches

By Rev. Raymond W. Beaver

In consultation with Sra S' Aye (Aye Myat Kyaw)

**E**ARLY BEGINNING. The two largest Karen groups in Burma are the Pwo Karens and the Sgaw Karens. Baptist mission among the Pwo Karens began with the coming of Miss Eleanor Macomber to Dohn Yahn village near Moulmein in 1836, and with the conversion and baptism of Pu Sung Pau on January 12, 1837. After a few years a church was formed in Dohn Yahn village, the first Pwo Karen church in Burma, one of the first to become self-supporting, under the guidance of Rev. Edwin Bullard.

Miss Macomber started a school for Pwo Karen children in Dohn Yahn and also carried on extensive evangelistic work

*Pwo Karen family threshing paddy.*



throughout the district until her untimely death in 1840. The 125th anniversary of the first Pwo Karen baptism was celebrated in 1962.

A boarding school for both Pwo and Sgaw Karens was established in Moulmein in 1848, using both Pwo and Sgaw dialects. This is one of the first schools for the general education of Karens, as the only other Karen schools at that time were those in Buddhist monasteries. In the early days the Pwo Karens were animists, though later many became Buddhists. Early Pwo Karen Christians had a passion for schools so that their children could read the "Book of Life" the Bible, and sing hymns.

One of the most outstanding Pwo Karen Leaders of those early days in the Moulmein area was Sra Kon Luht, early pastor of Dohn Yahn church, the first Pwo Karen to be ordained, the first to travel to America (1848), a language teacher and Bible translation assistant, and one of the early principals of the Karen Boarding School in Moulmein.

Rev. and Mrs. Durlin L. Brayton came to Mergui in 1839 to serve as missionaries to the Pwo Karens of that district. There they opened a school during the rainy seasons only, so the Braytons could do evangelistic work in the villages during the dry seasons. Moulmein and Mergui districts were then under British rule following the first Anglo-Burmese War.

The Pwo Karen churches in the Moulmein, Mergui and Tavoy districts have always been part of the Sgaw Karen Associations as was the practice in other parts of Burma. Mission policy in this area assumed that work among the Pwo Karens could be satisfactorily accomplished using the Sgaw Karen language and its literature. At present there are only two Pwo Karen churches in the Tenasserim Division while there are many thousands of Pwo Karens in that area who have either rejected Christianity or have never heard the Gospel. This truly is a needy mission field, and is a special concern of the Pwo Karen Conference today.

After Durlin L. Brayton left Mergui in 1854, there were no other American missionaries specifically assigned to Pwo Karen work in the Tenasserim Division until Rev. and Mrs. Paul Hasel, 1946-1949.



**Servants of Christ.** Missionaries have had their Pwo Karen assistants who were invaluable in carrying the Gospel to yet unreached villages. Through the years the Christians have been taught that church members and pastors alike are responsible for witnessing for Christ. The Pwo Karens were led step by step to shoulder more and more of the educational and evangelistic responsibilities. Consequently, when the Japanese occupied Burma and missionaries had to leave the country from 1941 to 1945, the work of Christ continued in a vital way. Through these years and the difficult times following independence, Pwo Karen Christians, along with their brethren of other groups, have witnessed effectively for Christ by their courage and faith in dangers and adversity. Pwo Karens exemplified their Christian concern for others by sharing food and shelter with refugees, often at great sacrifice. Unsettled conditions in the districts, fighting, suspicions, burning and relocation of villages put many thousands to flight. Many of these were like the early Christians we read of in the Book of Acts who witnessed boldly for Christ as they were scattered abroad by persecution.

**Pwo Karens Who Have Served.** Pwo Karen Christian schools and churches have taught the principles of democracy, service, and integrity that contribute to make Burma strong. It would be impossible to even list all the Pwo Karens who have made significant contributions in many fields to their local communities and to the nation. Two examples are Dr. Daw Sein Shin, an outstanding lady physician, and Mahn Ba Saing, Speaker of the lower chamber of Burma's Parliament. Hundreds of pastors, teachers, nurses, government officials, and men and women in many walks of life made Christianity meaningful to those around them.

**The Bassein Field.** When Rev. Elisha Abbott went to British-held Sandoway on the west coast in 1840 to open work among the Sgaw Karens, he also took a keen interest in the Pwo Karens of the area. The Karens trekked over the Arakan Yomas from their villages a hundred miles away, to study the Bible and the Christian faith under Rev. Abbott. (See pages 110 ff.) Many of the first Pwo Karen converts in the Bassein District were

won to Christ through their Sgaw Karen neighbours. When the Pwos saw that the Sgaws had a missionary, they, too, begged to have their own missionary, but it was not till 1849 that the first missionary to the Pwo Karens, Rev. H. L. Van Meter, came to Sandoway to take up work among the seacoast villages. A year later Mahn Shwe Bo became the first Pwo Karen of the Bassein District to be ordained.

In 1852, after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, British rule was extended to include the Bassein District. Both the Abbotts and the Van Meters moved to Bassein, making it possible for the first time for missionaries to tour Karen villages in that district. (See Chapter 19.)

For the first 26 years the Pwo Karen churches were in the same Association with the Sgaw Karen. However, in 1863, the Pwo Karens formed their own Association with 584 baptized Christians in 13 churches. The next 80 years saw a tremendous growth in churches and membership, for by 1947, there were 8,344 baptized believers in 92 churches with 21 ordained and 52 unordained pastors.

Many missionaries have served the Bassein Pwo Karens through the years but none as long as Rev. Leonard W. Cronkhite. The Bassein Pwo Karen story would not be complete without some mention of this remarkable man. Arriving in Bassein in January 2, 1884 with Mrs. Cronkhite, he taught in the Pwo Karen School and also toured the villages in evangelistic work to preach and to strengthen the churches. At his retirement in 1922, Mr. Cronkhite wrote: "Not without sadness do I sit down to write this last report of my missionary career. I am no longer physically able to carry on the work. Forty years ago Mrs. Cronkhite and I sailed for Burma....Then in 1884 we found 1250 members in 22 churches....The schools have grown proportionately and we now have 80 village schools, 63 churches and more than 4000 churchmembers." Dr. Cronkhite's successor was Rev. Charles L. Conrad who, with Mrs. Conrad, served for the next 27 years. After the Conrads left Burma in 1949, the Bassein Pwo Karens were without a missionary for the next ten years.

The Pwo Karen Normal School was started in Bassein in 1865



and has been the source of a strong, educated leadership among the Bassein Pwo Karen churches for nearly a hundred years. A new school building was erected to replace the old one in 1885. The school was destroyed by bombs in World War II, and again partly destroyed in the civil strife in 1949.

The Pwo Karen Christians were scattered and carried on the work in three separate centers, which resulted in dividing the Association into three: the Kyaunggon-Kyonpyaw Association with its high school at Pyawgon in the northern section, the Myaungmya Association in the south with its high school in Dobigone in the suburbs of Myaungmya, and the central part which retained the old name of Bassein-Maungmya Association in Byantgyi until it was possible to return to Bassein town in 1959.

The leadership of the Kyaunggon-Kyonpyaw Association has been carried by Sra Shwe Ba, ex-member of the Legislative Council. The full-time secretary of the Myaungmya Association is Sra Po Li. The executive secretary of the Bassein-Myaungmya Association is Mahn Knight. These men are the first full-time secretaries of these Associations, and this marks a significant step in the self-direction of the churches.

After the civil war broke out in Bassein and the Christians fled, squatters occupied the compounds for ten years. In 1959 the Caretaker Government cleared the compound of squatters, and the Pwo Karen Christians returned and began repairing and rebuilding. Rev. and Mrs. Edwin T. Fletcher moved into the mission house in 1960 and helped with various phases of the work. By the help of such leaders as Sramu Christine, Sramu Amy, and others, the school grew in numbers, influence and standards, and became a high school again.

In October 1962 the Bassein Pwo Karen Baptist community entertained the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference and celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Bassein Pwo Karen Baptist Church. Sra Johnnie was pastor of this church for 48 years and was present for the celebration.

**Henzada-Danubyu Field.** In 1854, Rev. Durlin L. Brayton was transferred from Mergui to Henzada to open up a new work among the Pwo Karens. During his one year stay in Henzada

he preached the Gospel in many villages of that district, baptizing 75 new converts, with another 50 baptized by a Pwo Karen pastor. A new church at Myin'kdaung village was formed.

From 1855 to 1897, a period of 42 years, the records, reports, and statistics are for the combined Sgaw and Pwo work. The only record of purely Pwo Karen activity in this field is of a meeting in 1897 in Henzada when a group of seven Pwo Karen churches called together delegates from the two other Pwo Karen fields, Bassein and Rangoon, to stir up one another in their evangelistic responsibilities. The following year a similar meeting was held in Kalon village. These meetings, along with the thanksgiving meeting in Thayagone village in 1884 to celebrate the completion of the translation of the entire Pwo Karen Bible, were fore-runners of the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference of 1908.

In 1899 there were eight churches with 411 members being led by three ordained and six unordained pastors in the Henzada-Danubyu field. At this time these churches were part of the larger Sgaw Karen Association.

In 1938 the youth of the Christian Endeavour Societies held their own meeting apart from their Sgaw Karen brethren, the initial step in this final separation of the Pwo Karen churches from the Association of both Pwo and Sgaw Karen churches. This meeting was held in Kyantanaw village; at this time, seven of the fourteen Pwo Karen churches decided to carry on their work and meetings apart from the Sgaw Karen churches in order to concentrate their efforts in improving Pwo Karen churches and making special evangelistic efforts among the many non-Christian Pwo Karen villages in the district. One of the leading figures in the new development was Mahn Kya Tun who died in 1955 at the age of 92. Another person who encouraged the Pwos to go forward on their own was Mahn Ba Khaing who was later assassinated in 1947 with other Burma government cabinet members.

In 1939 two more churches joined the Pwo Karen Association making nine churches. In 1953 Sra Thein Lwin became their first full-time secretary to carry out the work of the Association. He was succeeded by Mahn Ba Kyaw and then Sra Shwe Dwe, a recent graduate of the Pwo Karen Bible Training school. At



this writing Sra Aung Nyunt Tin is serving as full-time secretary of this Association.

**Rangoon-Maubin Field.** After spending one year in Henzada, Rev. D. L. Brayton moved to Rangoon in 1855 where he worked till his death in 1900. While in Rangoon, Mr. Brayton and his Pwo Karen assistants carried on extensive evangelistic work in the Hanthawaddy District to the west and southwest of Rangoon.

One of the outstanding Pwo Karen pastors at that time was Sra Myat Tha, the first pastor of the Pwo Karen Kemmendine church and also assistant to Mr. Brayton in the translation and revision of the Bible. Many Pwo Karen pastors down through the years of mission efforts, although limited in education, have been men of great faith, loyalty, and courage who would be a credit to any church anywhere in the world.

By the year 1861, the Rangoon-Maubin Pwo Karen Baptist Association was formed by eight churches in the village of Poppa, actually the first Association of Pwo Karen Baptist churches as the Bassein Association was not formed until 1863. The Pwo Karen church in Kemmendine came into being about that time and was probably one of the first eight in the Association.

In 1879, Rev. and Mrs. Walter Bushell arrived in Maubin as the first missionaries to be located in that town. Mr. Bushell carried on the evangelistic touring of the districts. They established the Normal School where thousands of Pwo Karens, as well as Sgaw Karens and Burmese, have received their education and Bible training for Christian faith and living.

One of the missionaries who labored long and effectively in the Maubin school and through the district was Miss Carrie Putnam who came to Maubin in 1887 and continued to serve there until she died in 1927. She left an endowment fund in her will, the interest of which has been used to help support the educational and evangelistic work of the Association. Other missionaries who have served for many years in Maubin among the Pwo Karens were Miss Minnie Pound and Miss Rebecca Anderson. Since the Fletchers evacuated Maubin in 1941, there have been no American Baptist missionaries living in that place or even

directly in charge of the work of this Association.

The Pwo Karen compound in Maubin was completely destroyed early in the troublous days of 1949, and a number of Christian villages were burned, making hundreds of homeless refugees in a time of general insecurity. Squatters occupied most of the compound, but as soon as a part of it was regained, the Pwo Karen Christians led by Sra Pan Hla Byu began to revive their church and school. Temporary buildings of bamboo and thatch were replaced by more substantial structures as more refugees came back to their homes, and more resources became available.

**The Pwo Karen Bible.** The Karens were a people without a written language prior to the coming of American Baptist missionaries. The first attempt to reduce the Pwo Karen language to writing was made by Rev. Jonathan Wade. Rev. Edwin Bullard and Rev. Durlin L. Brayton also were pioneers in this important task. A peculiar orthography found among the Lehkeh Pwo Karens near the Thai-Burma border, called "hen-scratching" proved to be too difficult for popular usage. An adaptation of Burmese letters was used after trying various other orthographies during the ten years from 1840 to 1850.

Mr. Wade, with the help of Pwo Karen assistants, set to work translating the Bible in conjunction with Rev. Francis Mason's translation of the Bible into Sgaw Karen. Mr. Bullard also began the translation of the Gospels of Matthew and John and other New Testament books, but his early death in 1847 cut short his work. Mr. Mason, in addition to his work with the Sgaw Karen translation, also did some translation of the Bible into Pwo Karen.

A first edition of 500 copies of Acts, translated from the Greek by Rev. Bullard, was printed by the Mission Press in Moulmein in 1847. The first edition of the whole Pwo Karen New Testament was printed in Tavoy in 1852.

With the death of Mr. Bullard, the major task of translation and revision of the Pwo Karen Bible fell on Rev. Brayton who was also assigned to general evangelistic work. Pioneering in village preaching and in organizing new churches, he could thus spare little time for translation work. When Brayton reach-



ed the age of retirement in 1847, and was not physically able to tour as before, he concentrated on completing the entire Pwo Karen Bible, with the help of his daughter, Mrs. Mary Brayton Rose, and Pwo Karen assistants such as Sra Kon Luht and Sra Myat Tha. The final translation and revision of the entire Bible was completed on September 17, 1878, approximately forty years after the work of translation had begun and twenty-six years after the first edition of the New Testament had come off the Press. The printing of the first edition of the whole Pwo Karen Bible was completed by the American Baptist Mission Press in Rangoon in 1883. In celebration, a thanksgiving meeting was held at Thayagone village near Wakema on January 10-11, 1884. Missionaries and Pwo Karen leaders from all the Pwo Karen fields gathered for two days to praise God for the Bible, now at long last translated and printed in their own tongue. They also took the opportunity to make definite plans for the distribution and sale of these new Bibles.

Since 1883 the Pwo Karen Bible has had three editions printed by the American Baptist Mission Press and two editions by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Pwo Karen people owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to all those who translated the Word of God into their mother tongue, and to those who have made possible the printing and distribution of the Pwo Karen Bible.

**The Pwo Karen Bible Training School.** The account of the history of this school can be found on pages 223-226 of Part I. Both as the Karen Women's Bible School for both Pwo and Sgaw Karen women from 1897 to 1934 and also as the co-educational Pwo Karen Bible Training School from 1934 to the present, this institution has played an invaluable role in the growth and strength of Christianity among the Pwo Karens.

**The Pwo Karen Baptist Conference.** In 1908 the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference was formed in Bassein. Prior to that time the two Pwo Karen Associations had very little contact with one another. At that time there were 26 churches and over one thousand baptized believers in the Rangoon-Maubin Association, and 47 churches with over 2600 baptized believers in the Bassein-

Myaungmya Association. The newly formed Pwo Karen Baptist Conference gave these two associations a united organization through which they became one of the constituent bodies of the Burma Baptist Convention. It gave the wide-scattered Pwo Karen churches opportunity to learn of each other's work in their annual meetings and to encourage one another in faith.

For many years the Pwo Karens gathered for their annual Pwo Karen Baptist Conference meetings with very little activity between meetings. In 1935 Sra Byu became the Honorary Secretary and Mahn Willington Nei Hla acted as his assistant. It was not until 1947 that Sra Kwa was elected full-time secretary of the Conference with responsibility to visit the Associations and try to co-ordinate their work. However, due to lack of funds, Sra Kwa served only one year. Later from 1949 to 1953 Mahn Po Way served as Honorary Secretary with Sra Aye Myat Kyaw (S'Aye) as his assistant. Both men served only part time as they had other work.

A definite step forward was taken in 1955 with the election of Sra Aye Myat Kyaw as full-time secretary of the Conference, to oversee all the Pwo Karen work and to carry out the responsibilities designated to him by the Conference Board of Management.

From 1950 to the present time the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference has been greatly helped through the Pwo Karen Planned Programme. Through Mr. Burchard Shepherd, one time Mission Builder and Treasurer in Burma, in conjunction with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, a sum of K 28,000 per year has been made available for student training, evangelism in needy areas, and general social uplift among the Pwo Karen villages. This plan has recently merged with the total programme of the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference. With the financial help of this programme some of our present outstanding leaders have been able to get training and support in their work, such as Mahn Knight, Mahn Thawry, and Mahn Cameron in publications and Mahn Ba Yin, Director of Evangelism of the Conference.

Mahn Ba Yin is seeking to make the Conference more aware of its evangelistic opportunities in new frontiers in the Tenasserim Division and in the Irrawaddy delta. Women's work has strong



leadership in Sramu Eleanor San Tay and Sramu Luella San Gyaw. Publications and youth work also are going forward. Pwo Karens have reason to be proud of their leaders and their accomplishments in all fields of Christian witness.

In 1961 Sra Aye Myat Kyaw (S'Aye) was elected General Secretary of the Burma Baptist Convention, and Sra Ba Yin was elected general secretary of the Pwo Karen Conference.

This brief sketch of the growth of the Christian religion among the Pwo Karens during the past 125 years shows that the way of Jesus Christ is firmly established among this people. Even so, it is estimated that only about one Pwo Karen in ten is a Christian. Greater things shall we and our descendants see because God has been working and will continue to work in the years that lie ahead.

#### Table of Statistics for 1962.

##### Associations within the Pwo Karen Baptist Conference.

| <i>Association</i> | <i>Churches</i> | <i>Members</i> |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Bassein-Myaungmya  | 41              | 3232           |
| Kyaungon-Kyonpyaw  | 41              | 4503           |
| Myaungmya          | 29              | 2209           |
| Rangoon-Maubin     | 43              | 2841           |
| Henzada Danubyu    | 13              | 740            |
| Totals             | 167             | 13,525         |



## 34 Work Among The Chinese

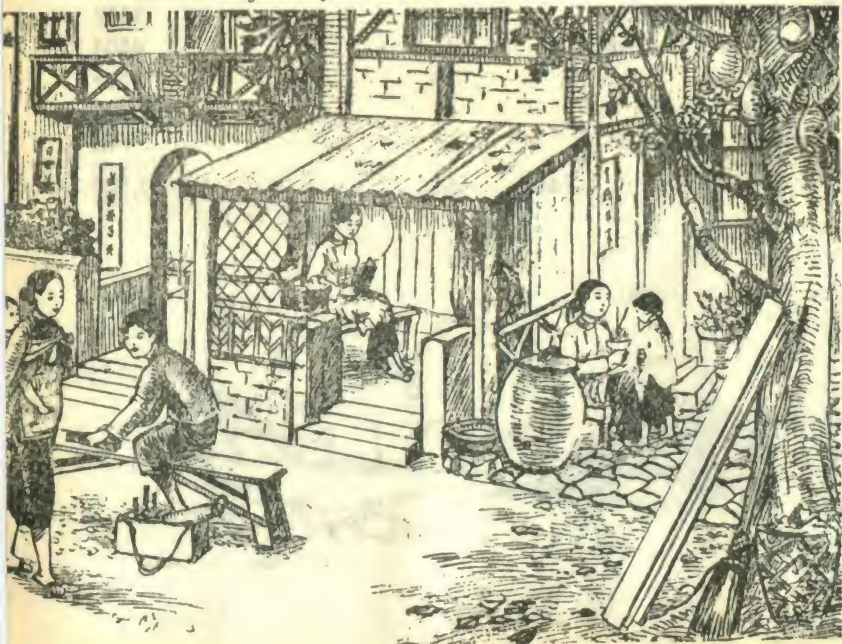
From 1828 to 1896 *By Rev. Erville E. Sowards*

From 1897 to 1963 *By Rev. Harold Schock*

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1828-1896.

**A**LTHOUGH Burma and China are neighbours and have had close contacts for centuries, apparently there were few Chinese in Lower Burma in the years Judson worked in Rangoon, and there is no mention of any Chinese among the early converts there. But Judson and the early missionaries were concerned about taking the Gospel to the millions in China, and were constantly looking for opportunities to advance in that direction. In 1833 Rev. John Taylor Jones and his wife were sent from Moulmein to Bangkok, Thailand. They found the Chinese there responsive, and in *A Chinese family at work.*





1835 the "first Protestant church in all Asia composed of Chinese members" was organized in Bangkok. That Chinese Baptist church is still active, and Burma Baptists can take pride in having been connected with its beginning.

**First Chinese Christian in Burma.** The first mention of a Chinese convert in Burma is in a letter by Mrs. Boardman in Tavoy about 1829. She tells of the Chinese convert Kee Zea-Chung who was witnessing to his countrymen. It is interesting to note that Tavoy, the place of the baptism of the first Karen convert in 1828, and of the first Chin convert in 1834, was probably also the place where the first Chinese convert was baptized, on August 3, 1828. (14th Annual Report, Tavoy Baptist Missionary Society, p. 6).

As British Burma developed more commercial contacts with other countries, more Chinese came by way of Hong Kong and Singapore. Burma needed skilled workmen, and offered many opportunities to those who had capital or were willing to work hard.

**Ah Vong, the Type-Maker.** When Rev. Cephas Bennett, the mission printer in Moulmein, went home on furlough in 1840, he took with him to America a young Chinese Christian named Ah Vong to learn type-making. Apparently he learned this very well, for in the account of the Mission Press in 1853 it is stated that the type foundry had a Chinese workman who was ingenious and "able to meet any demand upon his skill in the preparation of type." In those days the Mission Press was printing Christian literature in Burmese, Sgaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Mon, English, and even Salong and Kumi Chin. This Chinese Christian is only one of the many hundreds of skilled Chinese workers in Burma who have helped build Baptist churches and schools, and furniture and equipment to facilitate the carrying on of the Christian work.

**No Missionary for Chinese Work.** Although no special missionary was assigned to Chinese work, many Baptist missionaries took an interest in Chinese students in mission schools, and others with whom they came in contact. Chinese converts joined Burmese or other churches, and many married and became part

of the indigeneous Baptist community. Rev. Ah Syoo, long pastor of the Burmese church in Moulmein, Dr. Ohn Shwe who gave his life at Mongnai, and Dr. Ah Pon at Taunggyi, are only a few of the many Baptist workers with Chinese ancestry who have added much to the Baptist heritage in Burma.

When Rangoon became the capital and commercial center of Burma, more Chinese came into contact with Baptist work. The Annual Reports of the Rangoon Burmese Missionary Society, beginning with 1865, mention baptisms of Chinese converts, the highest number being 26 in one year (1866 Annual Report 9-11). One was employed as an evangelistic worker among Chinese.

Because so many records in Burma were lost during the war, accurate information about the Chinese work by Baptists for the next few decades is not available here. But we can be sure that there were converts in various places, as in the previous decades.

## From 1897 to 1963

By Rev. Harold Schock

**B**APTIST work among the Chinese advanced more rapidly, from 1897, spurred by two factors. First is the remark in the American Baptist Union Annual Report of that year that "the country is fast becoming the paradise of emigrants from all portions of the Orient. The way is open for reaching the Chinese, particularly." (1897 Annual Report 7).

Second is the arrival of Rev. William F. Gray in Rangoon to become pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church, then called the English Church. Because he had formerly been a missionary in China, Rev. Gray felt a deep compulsion to minister to the Chinese in Rangoon. So in 1899 he extended his ministry to these people whose language and customs he already knew.

Within two years, a Chinese pastor, Ah Leon, was enlisted to help and did very effective work. (1901 Annual Report). By 1907 two Chinese were at work, sponsored by the Rangoon Baptist City Mission Society, spending their time largely in Rangoon but occasionally visiting surrounding towns. In the Annual



Report of 1907, "The Burma Conference urges very strongly the appointment of a missionary who shall give his time wholly to work among the Chinese." (1907 Annual Report 84). Similar recommendations were included in the Annual Reports for the years of 1910 and 1911.

By early in the twentieth century 100,000 Chinese were in Burma. By 1907 there were 62 converts in Rangoon, but only ten of these remained in the city due to the high mobility of these people. (1910 Annual Report N.B.C.).

Not only in Rangoon were the Chinese receiving the witness of the Gospel, but in Moulmein also several were baptized in 1906. In the Annual Reports is a picture of our growing Baptist witness to the Chinese: "The outstanding feature at the Prome Mission during the past year has been the interest among the Chinese, both in Prome and Thayetmyo. Chinese men from 20 to 30 years old have been baptized and many others have expressed a desire to be received into the church. A Chinese evangelist from Rangoon has been assisting in this field. At the present time they seem to be particularly accessible, and the Missions should make the most of this opportunity.

"On the Bassein field over 60 Chinese have been baptized during the year. They bid fair to make their work entirely self-supporting from the beginning and are taking subscriptions to build a 6000 rupee church and school. The older missionaries say that the Burmans respect the Chinese and will be influenced by them as by no other nation. Already they are asking what this stir among the Chinese means, and for the first time in the history of the church many non-Christian Burmans are present at the Chinese evening services.

"\* \* \* Tavoy, where there are supposed to be about 5000 Chinese, the Chinese evangelist, Saya Ah Hpan, and a Chinese pastor from Rangoon have been working. There is need of a regular preacher, as many of these people are manifesting interest." (1917 Annual Report N.B.C. 79).

"All over Burma, mostly in the cities to which they have come seeking work, the Chinese, almost without any effort by the missionaries, present themselves asking for baptism. Difficulties

in the way of the work are the lack of trained men to look after the converts, and their tendency to drift from place to place following opportunities for work." In Mandalay, Mr. Ernest Tribolet said: "We are anxious to start a Chinese department in our high school, and I am sure thousands of Chinese townsmen would appreciate it." At the request of the Chinese themselves, Mr. Ernest Grigg has been appointed to take oversight of the Chinese work. (Report N.B.C. 114).

Apparently Chinese Christians in Bassein, Henzada, Pegu, Rangoon, Toungoo, Pyinmana, and Mandalay, where Mr. Grigg went in their behalf, were greatly encouraged by his visits. By 1921 the Chinese Baptist constituency in Burma comprised about 400 members of whom more than 70 were received that year. There is no more promising work for Christ to be found anywhere in Burma, was Mr. Grigg's conviction. In Mandalay, especially, the work was flourishing at that time with 64 baptized in one year. Here, too, the Chinese completely supported their own work. Some assistance in teaching came from the Swatow Academy for boys, but their crying need was expressed as being land on which to build a combined pastor's house and church with an adjacent school building. (1921 Annual Report N.B.C. 93).

From the reports and statistics it seems that the golden age of reaching the Chinese began to slip from our grasp during the 1920's. It seems evident that following Mr. Grigg's work with the Chinese on a part time arrangement, there lingered only struggling Christian groups here and there with no strong ties locally or centrally. This is borne out by a 1933 report which states: "The Chinese work is not so prominent, but some work is carried on. The only evangelist in Upper Burma, Saya E Hwe, who has been at Myingyan and Meiktila for many years, is now to go to Mandalay. The Tavoy Chinese group needs a preacher."

The great diversity of spoken Chinese dialects has caused problems. Some effort at division of work by dialects has resulted in the Methodists in the Rangoon area working among the Mandarin and Foochow dialects, while the Baptists have worked among the Cantonese. After presenting a request to the Baptist Chinese workers, the Methodists also began working among the Cantonese



in their area of the city in 1961. The Methodists also work in Kamayut, Pegu, and Kyaukme. Since it is the Baptists rather than the Methodists who have work among the various tribes on the China-Burma border, the Chinese Christians there are almost entirely Baptist-related. It is impossible to mention all the towns with a nucleus of Chinese Christians among our Baptist churches. Unfortunately, there has never been any organization or force which has tied the various Chinese Christian groups together. They are united only in Associations and the Convention, but this form of unity is not much help to small scattered Chinese groups.

**Post War.** Postwar work among the Chinese can be outlined in three paragraphs, viz., the rebirth at Immanuel, the China border influx, and the hope of the future. What appears in these sections has come from those who still have a hand in making Christ known among the Chinese of Burma.

In 1945 Mr. Chow of Rangoon began to put together the war-scattered pieces of the Immanuel Chinese work. Saya Ah Hpan of Tavoy, who was a carpenter in Rangoon for many years before the war, assumed leadership until retirement at 82 years of age. The one hundred or more Chinese at Immanuel have lacked strong leadership to bind them into an aggressive evangelistic witness. Nevertheless, they maintain a full program of worship and Bible study with a rather strong young people's group. They have long been in need of pastoral leadership. Their most recent part-time leader, Harry Wu, who has been studying in the Burma Divinity School, has emigrated to Hongkong.

**China Border Area.** The Chinese in the hill sections of Burma are increasingly numerous. Among the many who have crossed over into Burma, some were already of the Christian faith, usually indentified with the China Inland Mission. Usually these Chinese worship in the local Kachin, Shan, or other language group churches, but have their own Sunday Schools and prayer meetings.

Three Chinese travelling evangelists have spent many years criss-crossing the Shan and Kachin States on preaching tours. One of these claims to have baptized over 1000 Chinese during his lifetime but no churches have been established. Their ministries have been sympathetic to both the Baptist and Methodist work.

but they themselves are not bound by either group in fellowship, co-operation, or support. In the absence of a Baptist Chinese Convention or Association of any kind, their labors for the Lord have no doubt played an important part in reaching for Christ the Chinese in the hill area of Burma.

**The Future.** As is true in any situation, the hope for the future lies in the young people now in training or willing to give themselves to the Lord's work. Four graduates from the Burma Divinity School in the last five years have produced a YMCA worker, Mr. Peter Loo; a pastor for the Kengtung Chinese Christian Community, Mr. Wilfred Ling; and two housewives. Hwa Zaw who graduated in 1965 has become the new pastor at Immanuel Chinese Church. One Chinese graduate of the Burman Seminary is now doing evangelistic work among the Chinese in the Kachin State area. Myitkyina, Bhamo, Mandalay, and Tavoy have groups of Christians that need trained Chinese pastors. A letter from Amos L. Pokey from Tavoy in January 1963 requests that a Chinese pastor be sent immediately. His prophetic remarks seem only to tell the history of many similar situations in Burma where there have been promising Chinese Christian groups but which are now not to be found. He writes: "Unless something is done for the young people here, when the old Christians are gone, there will be no more Chinese Christians in Tavoy."

To meet the needs of Chinese Christians and to begin an aggressive evangelistic efforts among the Chinese of Burma, there must be a continued supply of high caliber Chinese young people entering our training schools. "How shall they believe in him without a preacher?"



## 35 Work Among The Asho Chins

by Genevieve and Erville Sowards

Using material from Salai Aung Saw and Dr. E. Carroll  
Condict, and a Burma Divinity School thesis by  
Mai Thet Hman, and Old Records.

**T**he Asho Chins are called "a scattered people even as grass between bricks." They are found in Arakan, the Arakan Yomas, the Irrawaddy and Sittang Valleys, and even some on the eastern side of the Pegu Yomas and the edge of the Shan Plateau. Their problem is more of distance than dialect.

There are few roads linking Asho churches scattered over about 200 miles of the Arakan coastal strip, and even less communication

*Asho Family in the Southern Arakan Yomas.*



with the majority of the churches to the east, across the Arakan mountain range. Even in the Irrawaddy and Sittang valleys, Chin villages are usually too far apart to maintain much contact with each other.

**First Chin Convert.** The earliest record of a Chin becoming Christian is in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (December 1856, page 452) in which Rev. Francis Mason wrote of baptizing a Khyen (old spelling of Chin) woman in Tavoy in 1834. Her name is not known.

**Kemee Chins.** Actually the first missionaries designated specifically to the Chins (Khyens) were Rev. and Mrs. Burpe of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Missionary Society, starting in 1845 in Arakan.

Several Baptist missionaries took an interest in the Kemees,<sup>1</sup> including Eugenio Kincaid. (*Webb, Incidents and Trials in the Life of Rev. Eugenio Kincaid, D.D., the Hero Missionary of Burma*, pp. 144-165) (See Book I. p. 109.)

Five Kemee Chins were baptized at Akyab in 1847, the first fruits of this branch of the Chin people. (*Missionary Jubilee*, p.181) (See Book I. p.107)

Rev. Lyman Stilson put the Kemee language into writing, using adapted Pwo Karen lettes, (*Missionary Jubilee*, p. 179) (See Book I. p. 109). He produced a spelling book and two reading books which were printed in Moulmein in 1848. (Proceedings of Convention of 1853, p. 112).

Two other missionary couples, Rev. and Mrs. Harvey E. Knapp and Rev. and Mrs. Harvey M. Campbell, came out to work among the Kemees. There were 24 baptisms, (St. John, *Baptist Investment in Burma*, p. 516) a school started and work begun but because of bad health conditions and deaths, no missionary served long.

After the death of Rev. Knapp no more Baptist missionaries were sent to the Kemees, as the opening up of Lower Burma re-

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<sup>1</sup> These people are a branch of the Chins, distinct from the Asho. Since work among them is not discussed separately, they are included in this Asho chapter as they live near the Ashos. There are several spellings: Kemee, Kemmee, Khumi, Kumi.



quired all the personnel available. But they were not entirely forgotten. In 1888 Mrs. B.C. Thomas made the long and arduous trip from Henzada to North Arakan to look up any surviving Kemeë Christians. She found Chetza's son and another who had moved nearer to Akyab.

After the Great Depression of 1929 and the years following, when missionary funds and personnel from the United States were so depleted, in an agreement on mission polity, the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, a British organization, sent a missionary to the Kemees (now spelled Khumis) and the work has prospered. Bible translation, using a Romanized script, has been done in two dialects of the Khumi.

**Asho Beginnings.** In 1856 ten Asho converts were mentioned in the Prome station report.

Asho Chin children were received into Karen Schools, especially at Henzada, and when converted, went back to witness to their own people, even across the Yomas to Arakan. (Sowards, *Our Baptist Heritage*, Section D.)

When the Burma Baptist Convention was organized in 1865, one of the first workers it supported was a Pwo Karen, Mahn Coompany (Company) to work among the Ashos in the Prome area. (Book I. p. 198-199). His script of the Asho language was later improved by Rev. F. O. Stevens. From the Burmese and Sgaw Karen, a version of the catechism, a few hymns and the Gospel of John were prepared. (*Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1868 p. 407-8)

So Tha Gyi, with the aid of the headman of the village of Hpayabaw in Padaung Township, opened a school for Asho Chins.

In 1871 a Chin disciple, named Shwe Daung went on a preaching tour in the Mindon area, with Maung Htike, a Burman. They were everywhere received by Chins and Burmans. Shwe Daung became the father of Samo Pyi Zo who later labored with the Ashos.

**Chins' First Own Missionaries.** In 1886 Rev. Arthur E. Carson was appointed by the Mission Board as the first missionary designated specifically to the Asho Chin work. He married Laura Hardin who had been teaching in Bassein. They first visited

Henzada. The elder Mrs. Thomas brought 13 Asho Chins from the jungle and Samohlen Carson had the joy of baptizing them.

**Thayetmyo.** Rev. and Mrs. Carson spent eight years in Thayetmyo before they went to Haka in the Northern Chin Hills to open that station. They acquired the Asho language, erected buildings, established schools and churches, did some translating, carried on a persistent campaign of evangelism, toured many districts inhabited by Chins. (Merriam, Laura Carson, *Pioneer Trails, Trials, and Triumphs*.)

After the Carsons left, Thayetmyo was occupied by a succession of missionaries who served only short periods there, as Rev. George R. Dye and Rev. H.W.B. Joorman who went home in 1910 broken in health. But in 1912 Rev. and Mrs. E. Carroll Condict came, and he worked in Thayetmyo, except for furloughs, about eighteen months in Rangoon as Field Secretary 1940-41, and enforced absences because of war and insurrection, until retirement in 1954. When no missionaries were stationed at Sandoway, he had the supervision of that field also. Dr. Condict rendered unusual service by extracting about 16,000 teeth "without pain and without payin" during his years in Burma.

The World War and the insurrections in Burma following independence greatly hindered the Asho Chin Work. The Thayetmyo area and much of Arakan were occupied by insurgents for a few years, and the general insecurity disrupted communications with the village churches. The Asho Christians carried on the work in spite of difficulties, and a Rainy Season Workers' Class at Thayetmyo trained leaders for village work.

**Sandoway** was opened as a station for Asho work by Rev. W.F. Thomas, the Karen missionary at Henzada. After he left Sandoway, several missionaries served there, usually for terms of only a few years. Among these were Rev. Frederick Howard Eveleth, Ernest Grigg, James C. Richardson and Sidney V. Hollingworth. Rev. Leo W. Spring served the longest period, two terms, 1915-21, and 1922-29.

Several ladies worked in the school there, among whom were Misses Melissa Aldrich, Melissa Carr, Annie Lemon, Helen



Bissell, Rose Lewis, Ina Fry, and Clara Barrows (Mrs. Hollingworth).

Asho Chin churches in Arakan were isolated for years from their brethren east of the mountains. As conditions gradually improved, the Asho Christians reopened a primary school in Sandoway, and young men were sent to the Burman Seminary for training to replace the losses by death and age.

**Asho Churches on Other Fields.** The missionaries working among the Burmese-speaking peoples on the Pyinmana, Prome, Toungoo, and Pegu fields gave valued help to the Asho Chin churches and members in their areas. The missionaries and national workers on the Henzada and Bassein fields, Karen as well as Burmese, gave attention to Asho Christians there. There are also many Asho members in Burmese and other churches.

**Literature.** The first Chin hymn book was published in 1892 at the A.B.M. Press. (*Hymns of Praise, Asho Chin*, p. 5)

Rev. Condict and Samo Aung Saw worked on a revision and got out an eight-page edition of 22 hymns. After years of careful work, the Asho Chin *Hymns of Praise* with over 170 hymns was published in 1941 and 1951. Much of this work was done by Samo Hla U working with a committee. In 1963 a new hymnal of 300 hymns has been completed. Dr. Condict, Samo Hla U and other helpers also completed the translation of the New Testament into Asho by 1954.

**Asho Chin Christian Leaders.** Through the years the Asho Christian community has produced leaders who have made valuable contributions to the cause of Christ in Burma. Samo Kha served as teacher and head master of the school at Sandoway, and later in Rangoon. He was President of the Burma Baptist Convention in 1952-53. Several members of his family are supplying leadership in different places and in various phases of the Christian work.

Another in Sandoway is U Moe, faithful layman, whose mother was one of the early converts in that region.

The President of the Burma Baptist Convention 1961-62 was Samo Pu Lay, an outstanding and beloved Chin leader. Unfortunately he died about the end of his term of office.

Another Asho contribution to the general work is Dr. Aung Thaik, who is now in charge of the Kengtung Christian Hospital during the furlough of the missionary doctor.

**Seventy-Fifth Anniversay.** In April 1963 at Thayetmyo the Asho Chin Christians held a big celebration of the 75th anniversary of the opening of the first Asho Mission station. It was well attended and the scale and zeal with which it was planned and carried out showed the capability of the Asho Christian community.

**Summary.** These are the 1961-62 statistics from the four Associations of the Asho Chin Baptist Conference:

North Arakan: 4 churches, 534 members, 5 workers.

South Arakan: 7 churches, 557 members 11 workers, about 60 pupils in the primary school at Sandoway.

Pegu: 8 churches, 592 members, 14 workers.

Irrawaddy: 9 churches, 1,586 members, 25 workers.

The school at Thayetmyo and village schools are now State Schools.

The total membership of the Asho Conference is about 3,300. The majority of these have come through trying years and have remained faithful. They provide a solid foundation for growth in the future.

Asho young people have studied in the Divinity School and other theological schools, and this training should help to promote progress of the work in the future. After a lapse of eight years there is again a missionary family at Thayetmyo, the only one designated primarily to the Ashos. Rev. and Mrs. Bryant Currier are just beginning their service in Burma, and will give valuable help to the general Asho work.



## 36 Baptist Work Among The Shans

by Dr. Ai Lun and Rev. Erville E. Sowards

**T**he People and Their Land.<sup>1</sup> "Shan" is the Burmese name for the people who call themselves *T'ai*, meaning "The Free." The Shans of Burma have close relatives in Assam, Yunnan, Laos, and Thailand. Since their great migrations of the thirteenth century they have been important in the history of Burma. More than a million Shans live in the Shan State, and in Shan villages scattered from Rangoon to Putao.

### *Shan Village Scene.*



Shan culture has ancient origins; and for centuries they have had a written language using an alphabet much like the Burmese. They do beautiful and distinctive weaving, and have expert silversmiths. The various Shan States have been ruled by local Sawbwas, some of whom maintained courts of truly Oriental splendor. The Shans are rightfully proud of their cultural achievements.

Shan country is mountainous but has many great valleys. The Shans are experts at terracing for rice growing, and have their villages in the valleys, while the higher slopes are occupied by many hill tribes, with different costumes, customs, and languages. Formerly the nearly forty Shan States were divided into the Northern, Southern, and Eastern Shan States. Now the whole area forms the Shan State of the Union of Burma, but the old regional names persist in common usage. (See page 201 ff.)

**Early Contacts in Burma.** In a letter written from Rangoon in 1831 Judson mentions the Shans first in a list of the peoples of Burma he represents as calling for help. When Eugenio Kincaid and his wife were in Ava in 1833-36, he wrote that a missionary would find a wide field of labor among the Shans. About the time that letter arrived in Moulmein, the missionary force there had been strengthened beyond the needs of the local work, and Judson was eager to extend to wider fields. Rev. and Mrs. Nathan Brown studied Shan.

In 1835 three British officials in India invited Baptist missionary work in Assam, and Rev. and Mrs. Brown and Mr. O.T. Cutter, a printer, went from Moulmein to open mission work in Sadiya under the name "Mission to the Shans." The first printing in "Shyan" was done in Assam. There are still Shan-speaking people in Assam who are descendants of the Shan migrants who established the Ahom Kingdom there in the thirteenth century. (See page 104.)

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1. In preparing this chapter the following sources have been used: An account of the Shweli Valley Baptist work by Dr. Albert Ai Lun; Dr. Wallace St. John's *Life of Josiah Nelson Cushing* and his unpublished *The Baptist Investment in Burma*; Torbet's *Venture of Faith*; Annual Reports of the Burma Baptist Convention; the *Burma News*; a history of the Mongnai church in Burmese (duplicated); and careful cross-checking from various other sources.



On his trip north from Ava in 1837 Kincaid met a party of Shans, talked to them in Burmese, and gave out tracts, but we know of no permanent results from this early contact. (Torbet p. 62)

A Shan was among the Karens baptized at Shwegyin in 1853. Shans were in Burmese and Karen Churches in other places. For example, in 1865 two Shans were baptized in Bassein, and one in a Karen village near Yandoon.

**Toungoo—First Base for Shan Work.** The first station for Shan and Burmese work was opened in Toungoo in March 1861 by Rev. Moses Homan Bixby, who had been on the Moulemein Burmese field a few years. The story of the Shan work at Toungoo has already been told in chapter 22. The chief results of the Shan work in Toungoo were trained Shan Christian workers and Shan Christian literature prepared there by the Cushings and other missionaries and their Shan helpers. The whole Bible had been translated into Shan by 1885, and thus was available when new Shan stations were opened in the Shan States, following the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886. When Shan stations were opened at Bhamo, Hsipaw, Mongnai, and Namkham in the midst of much larger Shan populations, the Shan workers at Toungoo, missionaries and nationals, were transferred to staff the new stations. The Shan-Burman church in Toungoo joined the Burmese Association.

**Shan Work in Bhamo.** In 1876 the China Inland Mission offered to let Baptists be responsible for Shan and Kachin work on the Bhamo field (they retaining the Chinese) if the station should be occupied at once. Since no new missionary was available for the Baptists, Dr. Cushing went to Bhamo and Mrs. Cushing carried on the work in Toungoo. Before leaving Bhamo Dr. Cushing had the satisfaction of baptizing the first Baptist convert in northern Burma, a Shan young man named San La Ye. (St. John: *Josiah Nelson Cushing*.) (See p. 209 f.)

Rev. and Mrs. J.A. Freiday came to the Shan work in Bhamo in 1878 and carried on amid many difficulties. Travel was dangerous because of numerous robbers, and they suffered losses of ponies, equipment and supplies. But in 1881 he crossed the

mountains and preached among the Shans of the Shweli valley. In 1884 when Bhamo was captured and plundered by Chinese and Kachin raiders, the missionaries narrowly escaped, and had to return to Lower Burma.

A succession of missionaries served only brief terms and then because of ill health or transfer had to leave Bhamo. After Dr. Robert Harper had to go home in 1925, the Shan station in Bhamo was officially closed. A small Burman-Shan Middle School was maintained on the Shan compound in Bhamo up until the coming of the war to Burma in 1942. Namkham and the Shweli Valley became the center for the Shan work in Upper Burma.

**Work in Hsipaw.** Dr. Cushing and Rev. Rose were able to travel extensively in the Shan States in the late 1860's and 1870's but after the death of King Mindon in 1878, the demands for tribute and elephants from the Shan Sawbwas became so heavy that some of them revolted, and much of the country was devastated. After the fall of King Thibaw, there was fierce civil war in the Shan States between supporters and opponents of the Shwelinbin Pretender, and it was some time before the British administration could restore order. The civil war prevented the usual cultivation of crops, and a severe famine resulted. In 1887 the Government of India enacted a law for the disturbed areas (including the Shan States) which prevented mission entrance until the country became more settled. (St. John, *Life of Cushing*.)

The Hsipaw Sawbwa, who had been helped by Dr. Cushing when in difficulties with the British Government in Rangoon, invited Dr. Cushing to open a mission station in Hsipaw, and promised his help. Thus early in 1890 Dr. Cushing escorted Dr. and Mrs. M.B. Kirkpatrick to Hsipaw and opened a new station. Dr. Kirkpatrick, although suffering from a disease which he knew would take his life, persisted in working as long as he could. He is buried in the Christian cemetery at Hsipaw. (See p. 234 f.)

As other Shan stations seemed to present better opportunities for the limited personnel and finances available, Hsipaw was closed as a mission station. There is still a small Christian



community and school there. With improved transportation by railway and highway, the missionary and national workers stationed at Maymyo are able to visit Hsipaw and give supervision to the work there.

**Work in Namkham and the Shweli Valley.** Rev. Wilbur W. Cochrane, an experienced Shan missionary, opened up the long-delayed new station at Namkham at about the same time that work began at Mongnai (1892). (Torbet, p. 235).

Most of the Shan missionaries in Namkham have been doctors. Among them were Dr. M. B. Kirkpatrick, his son Dr. C. A. Kirkpatrick, Dr. Walter Rittenhouse, and Dr. Robert Harper.

At first the Shan missionary at Namkham was responsible for the Kachin work too, but in 1906 a separate missionary was appointed for the Kachin work. However, occasionally one missionary family had to serve both language groups. The hospital served Shans, Kachins, Chinese, and other races on an equal basis. In 1914 separate Shan and Kachin churches were organized, and in 1919 the schools for Shans and Kachins became separate too.

From 1922 Dr. and Mrs. Gordon S. Seagrave served in Namkham until World War II forced their evacuation from Burma. They gave the longest continuous service to the Namkham mission. New buildings were constructed, using the cobblestones from the Shweli River, and better equipment was added. The Nurses' Training Class trained young women from wide areas of Upper Burma for good service to their country and people. Dr. Seagrave's books about "Waste-Basket Surgery" gave wide publicity of the work to the American public. (See p. 235 f.)

Within ten years of the beginning of the Shan work in Namkham, a second Shan church was started at the village of Se-lan, about seven miles north in the Shweli Valley. By 1904 a new school and two teachers' houses were built at Se-lan. Later a third Shan church was organized at Mu-se, about twenty miles north of Namkham, in the Shweli Valley.

After fifty years of mission work, when war came to Burma

in 1942, there were about five hundred Christian Shans in the Shweli Valley, and a firm foundation had been built.

The war brought trials and testing to the Shan Christians. When the Japanese occupied the Shweli Valley, they mistook the Shan pastor in Mu-se, Saya Paw Kham, for Chinese, and murdered him and his son. Immediately the rumor spread that the Japanese would persecute and kill Shan Christians, and many of them evacuated to the jungle with only what they could carry with them. They built bamboo chapels for their worship services.

In spite of dangers, Christmas 1942 was celebrated by the Shweli Valley Christians, with Shan Buddhist and Japanese guests. Their experience together led to the formation of the Shweli Valley Baptist Association, with Saya Ai Pan, pastor of the church at Namkham, as President, and Saya Kham Yee as Secretary.

Dr. Seagrave, who had resigned from mission service in 1942 to join the medical Corps of the United States Army, did not return to Burma Baptist Mission service. His American friends organized an independent, non-denominational agency to operate the hospital in Namkham along with an Advisory Committee of local leaders, and the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society leased the Namkham Hospital compound and buildings to this agency at a very nominal rate. (See p. 236.)

The Shweli Valley did not escape the general insecurity of the post-war and post-independence periods. Namkham was occupied for a time in 1950 by insurgent forces, and they took personnel and medical supplies with them when driven out by Government troops. Dr. Seagrave was arrested and brought to Rangoon, and his sister Dr. Grace Seagrave, carried on the hospital work in Namkham until her untimely death in August 1951. Then Dr. Albert Ai Lun, a Shan doctor trained in Namkham and Lucknow, came to continue the work. His widowed mother, Daw May Ye, is the "mother" of the Muse Church, the first Shan convert in that area. After his release, Dr. Seagrave returned to Namkham and continued as Medical Consultant to Dr. Ai Lun, then the official head of the hospital.



The Shweli Valley Shan Baptists faced up to Christian work in their area. The church and school buildings were rebuilt, with only a fraction of the cost paid by the Mission. At Mu-se a fine new church building was dedicated in the Christmas season of 1952, for which collections had been taken for nineteen years. During the Japanese occupation, the money had been converted into silver rupees and buried in the ground.

Besides supporting their own churches, the Shweli Valley Baptists send evangelists to their Shan, Lisu, Palaung, and hill Chinese neighbors. A vigorous campaign of evangelism uses modern equipment, with work for young people, and for women and children. In 1956 a Shan Bible Training School was opened in Namkham by Saya Ai Pan. Later when the Shan State Bible School was opened at Taunggyi, Saya Ai Pan was released to it for two years. (See p. 233.)

The Christian membership grew to about two thousand by 1960--by far the largest group of Shan Baptists in Burma.

**The First Palaung Couple.** Soi Kham Binya and his wife were baptized in 1952 as a result of Shan evangelistic work. Tu Ja, the first Palaung graduate of the Shan State Bible School, is in charge of the Palaung work near Mu-se. In 1960 the Shweli Valley Association sent an evangelist to the Shans in the Myitkyina area. In the hills adjoining the Shweli Valley a strong church has been organized among the Lisus, and they join with their Shan Baptist neighbors for the annual Christmas celebrations of the whole Shweli Valley Christian community with hundreds of their Buddhist neighbors.

### **Work in the Southern Shan States:**

#### **Mongnai, Taunggyi, Loilem.**

The Baptist church in Mongnai traces its history back to 1888, and the mission station was established in 1892 by Dr. and Mrs. W. C. Griggs and Mrs. Huldah Mix. Unfortunately, Mongnai is situated in a valley in which malaria has long been a problem, and also the frequently-fatal black-water fever. (See p. 234 f.)

In 1893 Dr. and Mrs. Albert Haley Henderson arrived in Mongnai to begin over forty years of medical, evangelistic, and

educational work in the Shan States. For a time Dr. and Mrs. Henderson had charge of the medical work, Rev. Wilbur W. Cochrane had the church and evangelistic work, and Mrs. Mix taught in the school and managed the home for abandoned children and orphans. Thra Bla Paw, a Bassein Karen, with the help of his wife Naw Bessie, became pastor of the Mongnai church, releasing the missionary for field work.

In 1903 Mrs. Henderson fell victim to the dreaded black-water fever and barely survived. Doctors recommended her return to the United States, but Dr. Henderson suggested removal to Taunggyi, a more healthful location. At first Dr. Henderson made the hundred mile trip to Mongnai on a bicycle, taking about two days each way. (Read, Katherine: *Bamboo Hospital*)

Dr. Howard Clinton Gibbens came out for Shan medical work in Mongnai. When missionary doctors were no longer available for resident medical work in Mongnai, national doctors served, including Dr. Lao Htin Ah Pon and Dr. Ohn Shwe. Dr. Ohn Shwe and his wife Daw Kyi Pyu were doing excellent work in 1936, when he was killed by a drunken man while trying to protect the man's wife from further assault. When the murderer was condemned, Daw Kyi Pyu pled for his life, as she was sure Dr. Ohn Shwe would have done, and the death sentence was commuted. Daw Kyi Pyu and her children stayed on in Mongnai until her children's health made it necessary to return to Lower Burma.

Mrs. Alexander worked in the Mongnai school for eight years (1917-1925). When the mission finances were so depleted by the great depression of the 1929's, both the school and the medical work in Mongnai were turned over to the local government.

World War II brought destruction to the buildings in Mongnai, but the church has been rebuilt, and the congregation continues as part of the Southern Shan States Baptist Association.

**Taunggyi.** In 1903, the British made Taunggyi the administrative center for the Shan States. Dr. Henderson started a dispensary in Taunggyi in 1906, part of the lumber being brought the hundred miles from Mongnai by bullock cart. Out-stations were established at Heho, about 22 miles west, at Hopong, about



14 miles east, and at a small town south of Hopong. Usually nurses trained in the dispensary at Mongnai or Taunggyi were located at these out-stations, and Dr. Henderson visited them regularly, and preached on "big bazaar days." (See p. 238.)

Schools were started at the very beginning of the work in Taunggyi, and soon there were the A. B. M. High School, the Huldah Mix Girls' school, and the Vernacular School.

Taunggyi soon attracted a cosmopolitan population, and the local Baptist church numbered representatives of many different language groups in its membership.

The villages around Taunggyi are largely Pa-O (Taungthu), yet in 1921 it was estimated that about one-fifth of the baptisms up to that time in the Taunggyi area had been Shans.

Miss Emily Payne, in charge of the mission work in 1907, is still remembered for her active help in the Pa-O work. (BBC Annual Reports). The Hendersons remained in Taunggyi in their home "Mountain Rest" after retirement, and continued to help the work in many ways. Taunggyi's healthful climate, good communications, and excellent bazaar attracted other missionaries for hot season vacations and retirement, and such institutions as the American School for Missionaries' Children and "Rest Haven," home for convalescent tuberculosis patients. Mrs. Huldah Mix, a tireless worker for Shan Christian literature, lived in Taunggyi from 1917 till her death in 1933. Rev. and Mrs. Henry Heptonstall retired in Taunggyi and helped the Christian work of the area. Dr. Henderson was one of the few American Baptist missionaries awarded the gold Kaiser-i-Hind medal for his service to the public. (Read: *Bamboo Hospital*)

Taunggyi suffered much damage in world War II. The A. B. M. High School, Huldah Mix Girls' School, and American School buildings and several residences were destroyed. The stone church was damaged. Dr. L. T. Ah Pon died in the Japanese occupation. After the war the National Christian High School came into being as successor to the pre-war Baptist schools, and new buildings were erected.

Dr. and Mrs. William D. Hackett live at the Pa-O Rural Christian Center a few miles south of Taunggyi. Dr. Hackett

travels extensively over the Southern Shan States and Kayah fields, and for the Burma Baptist Convention over much of Burma, as he is the Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and the Economic life of the Church. Mrs. Hackett is engaged with a committee in translating the New Testament into Pa-O. In April 1962 she was one of the four people ordained at the annual meeting of the Southern Shan States Baptists, probably the first missionary woman to be ordained by a national group in Burma. (*Burma News*, 1962, No. 4, pp. 4-5)

**Area Organization.** The Southern Shan States Indigenous Home Mission Society is an outstanding example in Burma of a Baptist group organized on a geographical, rather than a language basis. The church in Taunggyi has members from a dozen or more racial or language groups, and other churches are Shan, Pa-O, Lisu and Black Karen. The Home Mission Society supports evangelistic workers in non-Christian villages. In December 1955 the Mission turned over to it the legal title to property connected with the local work. Since the war the Baptists of this area have raised funds from their own resources for the many new buildings and for the support of a vigorous and varied program.

The dispensary is still in operation under the direction of Dr. San Hlaing, a Shan who was partly trained by Dr. Henderson. Modern methods of treating tuberculosis have made it unnecessary to operate the Rest Haven as formerly.

The Shan State Bible School in Taunggyi opened in 1956, trains Christian workers, both men and women, for service among the diverse peoples of the Shan State, with steadily-increasing support from the Baptist community.

Baptists from many language groups, and from many sections of Burma have contributed to the progress of the work in Taunggyi. Saya Ba Te is especially worthy of mention, as he continued to serve and to inspire until his death in 1958.

**Loilem.** Loilem, about fifty miles north of Mongnai, and about the same distance east of Taunggyi, was long an outstation of Mongnai. It is about 2,000 feet higher than Mongnai, and has a more healthful location. It is also situated on the



main high-ways of the Southern Shan States. Dr. and Mrs. Gibbens retired here in 1932, and gave general oversight to the Loilem field until they had to evacuate in 1942. (See p. 238.)

In the 1930's because of the Depression in the United States, drastic curtailment of the work in Burma had to be made. The Bible Churchmen's Mission Society, a British organization, was prepared to take over work in the Southern Shan States. Small hospitals were established at Panglong, a few miles north of Loilem, and at Langkho, within twenty miles southeast of Mongnai. Local Baptist churches retain their connections with local Baptist organizations, but the major responsibility for evangelistic work among the non-Christian Shans of the Southern Shan States was relinquished by Baptists.

The Loilem compound was swept clear of all buildings by the end of the war, but the local church soon put up a small church building. A Shan pastor Saya Si La, and his wife Daw Miriam, a trained nurse, have served many years.

About 1903 the first *Black Karens* were baptized, and soon a church was organized in the village of Nawng Pawng, a few miles northeast of Loilem. (BBC Annual Reports) There are about three hundred Black Karen villages in that general area, but after nearly sixty years there is still only one Black Karen Baptist church. Thus this is one of our "opportunity spots" in Burma.

In *Lisu* villages east of Loilem, three Lisu churches have been organized. In 1958 the Burma Baptist Convention accepted the Loilem field as one mission field for which the Convention has special responsibility. Rev. Ko Willie, a graduate of the Burma Divinity School, was made the Superintendent of the field. A small dormitory for Lisu students attending the State School in Loilem has been built on the Baptist compound. With the help of the Relief Committee of the Burma Christian Council, Lisu refugees have been re-settled in a new location east of Loilem named E-phet (Ephesus). In the season of 1962 a student work camp gave good help to the Lisu villagers, and together they made a strong Christian witness to other villages in the vicinity, as well as a close bond of Christian love between Loilem and Lower Burma. (*Burma News*, 1962 No. 4, pp. 10-14)

## In The Eastern Shan States

**Kengtung**, largest of the old Eastern Shan States, lies mostly east of the deep gorge of the Salween River, and borders on China, Laos, and Thailand. Probably few rural areas of the world have such a mixture of populations as is found in the Kengtung area. Shan villages are in the valleys, and Lahu, Wa, Akha, Tai-Loi, Kachin, Lisu, Chinese, and other villages are in the hills.

Dr. and Mrs. Cushing visited Kengtung in January 1870 and spent eleven days there, preaching in the bazaar and giving out tracts. (See p. 208).

Not until 1901 was a mission station for work among the Shans established in Kengtung by the Rev. and Mrs. William M. Young, who had served at Hsipaw and Mongnai. Karen workers from Lower Burma went with Rev. Young to help start work on the new field. In 1902 a temporary chapel was dedicated, the first convert baptized, Lon Hpa Kat Sai, who had received a tract when Cushing was in Kengtung thirty-two years earlier and had been much influenced by it. His daughter Nang Seng was baptized about a year later.

**Medical work** began with the arrival of Dr. and Mrs. Howard Clinton Gibbens in 1903, and a hospital building was completed. Dr. Robert Harper worked in Kengtung from 1907 till 1915.

As in other fields, the Shan work in Kengtung made slow progress. But the Shan missionary was soon overwhelmed by the great response among the Lahus and Was, who requested baptism by the thousands. Several missionaries came at times to take much of the work for the hill peoples. In 1908 the Burma Baptist Convention increased support to Kengtung "that vigorous work may be carried on among the Shans also." A Seminary graduate and his wife were placed in the village of Nong Gnung, where the headman gave a small ruby for a copy of the Shan Bible. A small school for Shan children was opened in Mong Yawng, and a third out-station was opened at Mong Lin, manned by two Shan families. In 1916 there were forty members in the Shan church at Mong Yawng, and a small Christian Shan community in Kengtung town. (See p. 236 f.)



There were many gaps in missionary terms, especially in medical work. Dr. Henderson's son, Ralph, came out for three years. Miss Elva Jenkins had the medical work for two years, while Miss Gladys Riggs greatly improved the school. Dr. and Mrs. Max D. Miles served in Kengtung from 1925 to 1931.

The Shan work in Kengtung took on new life with the coming of the Buker twins in 1934 after serving their first term in Bana, Pangwai, and Mong Mong. Dr. Richard Buker started a training course for "nurse-compounders" for men. His last year the dispensary gave 20,000 treatments, the hospital had about 400 in-patients, and about 1,000 leprosy patients were under treatment in villages scattered over Kengtung State. Dr. Buker made long trips to villages, examining hundreds of people, to find the dread disease in its early stages. The American Leprosy Missions gave financial help to this work. When Dr. Buker went on furlough in 1940, Dr. Lao Htin Po took over the medical work.

Rev. Raymond Bates Buker and his wife went to Kengtung in 1934 for evangelistic and educational work. In May he reported having made a 22-day tour of 225 miles by motor and 200 miles on foot, visiting over a dozen villages. In June he reported another trip of 130 miles, all on foot. Shan baptisms on the Kengtung field averaged more than one hundred per year. On a Sunday in April 1939 forty-two Shans were baptized at one time, a record for Baptist work among the Shans.

In 1941, there were 130 baptisms and more than 20 were waiting for baptism. Literacy among new converts was increased by holding one-week Bible classes in which adults were taught to read. In March 1939 Rev. Buker reported that about 800 persons had been enrolled in such classes, held in 11 places.

One of his reports contained this sentence: "Why do we say that they are slow to accept when so many have never been told?" (*Burma News*, June 1934, p. 83)

Unfortunately the coming of World War II to Burma brought an abrupt halt when missionaries were evacuated to India and all help from abroad was cut off. Under the Japanese occupation Kengtung was attached to Thailand and was occupied by Thai

troops. By the end of the war extensive damage had been done to buildings on the mission compound in Kengtung.

The work of rehabilitation after the war had hardly begun when the post-independence insurrections in Burma made the transport of supplies to Kengtung almost impossible. When the Communist regime took over China in 1949, Chinese Nationalist troops (Kuo Ming Tang or KMT's) crossed the border into Burma and created many difficulties for several years.

The problem was at least partially solved by the Burma Army with international help in evacuating many KMT troops to Formosa. After that, Shan insurgents brought new difficulties to the Kengtung area. The Shan churches in villages outside of Kengtung town have been almost completely isolated since 1941.

Although the missionary could not tour in the villages, runners from leprosy villages came into Kengtung for medicine and supplies, and thus some work was continued in spite of the difficult conditions, although it was impossible to check on treatment progress of the 1,400 leprosy patients in 16 villages.

When Rev. and Mrs. Vincent Young had to leave Bana, China, in 1949, they came to the Shan compound in Kengtung, where he supervised the reconstruction of the church and hospital buildings. Another substantial church building was erected in the nearby Christian Shan village of Kanna. Rev. Young went home on furlough in 1954 and could not return to Burma.

When there was no missionary in Kengtung, the responsibility for general supervision of the Christian work fell upon Thra Aung Din, a graduate of the Burma Divinity School, and the representative of the Burma Baptist Convention. After he was transferred to the northern Lahu-Wa mission field in 1957, Rev. John Po became the Field Superintendent of the Kengtung Shan mission field for the Convention. He is loyally supported by his wife Naw Thein Tin, a trained nurse. In spite of the difficulties and dangers of communications, he has been able to visit some of the Shan village churches so long isolated. In January 1961 he baptized 28 Shans in the village of Mong Yang, near the Chinese border. With the literacy rate only about 30% among the Shan Christians on the field, it is surprising that the churches have



shown so much spiritual vitality through these years of isolation.

Dr. and Mrs. Keith Dahlberg arrived in 1957 for the medical work in Kengtung and for the supervision of the leprosy work. They re-opened the hospital which had not been in full operation since early 1942. Miss Margaret B. Smith, a trained nurse appointed by the Woman's Baptist Foreign Mission Society, has helped in this work. The Dahlbergs left on furlough in April 1962, and Dr. Aung Theik, a Christian Asho Chin, left Government service to take over the work in Kengtung at this time of need.

**Workers from Kengtung.** The Kengtung area has made important contributions to the Christian community in Burma. U Shwe Wah, a young novitiate in a Buddhist monastery in Kengtung when Cushing visited there in 1870, later became Cushing's chief helper in translating the Bible into Shan. Cushing paid high tribute to him for his ability and sacrificial spirit.

Daw Shwe Ain (mother of Mrs. Ai Lun) was born in a village in Kengtung State. She was in Christian work for 45 years in the Southern Shan States, and then went to the Northern Shan States, organizing women's societies in Maymyo, Hsipaw, Namtu, Muse, Se-lan, and Namkham. Shan Baptists of the Shweli Valley recognized her great service by awarding her a gold medal on Christmas 1952. She died on June 13, 1954 at the age of eighty-years. (*Burma News*, March-April 1961, p. 32)

The first Shan convert on the Kengtung field, Lon Hpa Kat Sai, became a preacher. His daughter, Nang Seng, baptized about a year after her father, married one of the Karen workers, Thra Boo Paw, who had come to Kengtung with Rev. Young. When she was left a widow with five young children, Nang Seng put her children through mission schools and took nurse's training in Moulmein. The son, Marcus, became a doctor, William became a professor in the University of Rangoon, Paul became Headmaster of the State High School in Thandaung and a Member of Parliament. These are some of the valuable contributions which Kengtung has made to the Christian community of Burma.

## Summary Of The Work Among The Shans

Christian work among the Shans has met with much the same difficulties as that among the other Buddhist peoples of Burma. Dr. A.H. Henderson, who worked more than forty years among the Shans, listed two more in connection with Shan work: the natural conservatism of the Shans fostered by centuries of isolation from currents of world life, and many generations under autocratic rule which hindered development of independent thought in the individual. Improvement of communications and the abolition of feudalism should do much to remove these difficulties. Experience has shown that persistent, consecrated work produces results among the Shans.

There has been an unusually high loss of missionary personnel due to ill health and death. Many devoted Shan Christians have rendered sacrificial service.

Medical work has been given more emphasis among the Shans than among any other people of Burma, with a higher proportion of their missionaries doctors.

The Shan work has been notable for its relations with work for other groups. The desire to open work among the Shans was a factor in beginning the Assam Mission. The Shan missionary at Bhamo helped begin work among the Kachins. Shweli Valley Shans sent workers to Palaungs, Lisus, and hill Chinese. From Shan stations in the south have come Pa-O, Lisu and Black Karen churches. The Kengtung Shan mission was the starting point for work among Lahus, Was, Tai-Lois, Akhas, and Chinese.

Thus in spite of discouragements and difficulties, Shan Christians have made important contributions to the progress of Christ's Kingdom in Burma.





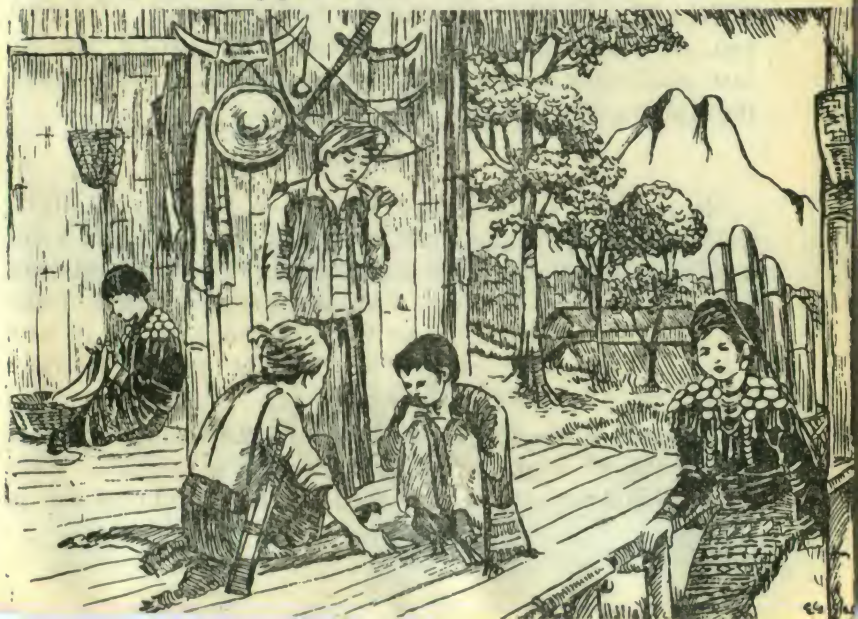
# 37 The Work Among Kachins

— including Lisus and Nagas —

By Rev. Donald M. Crider.

**I**NTRODUCTION. Kachin is the name commonly applied to the four hundred thousand tribesmen calling themselves Jinghpaw (Chyinghpaw) scattered across the mountains of Western China, Northern Burma, and Eastern Assam. Basically Mongolian, speaking at least seven different languages and several dialects, they recognize Jinghpaw as their common tongue. A mountain-dwelling people, renowned for their fierce and warlike nature, they were much feared. One of their chief pastimes in the pre-colonial period was pillaging the caravans on trade routes from Bhamo, in Northern Burma, into China. They were a hunting people economically, though by the time of this history, they were following a hillside-rice cultivation way of life.

*Kachin boys feeding pet crows.*



**Early Contacts.** Just a quarter of a century had elapsed from the time the Judsons landed in Rangoon to the meeting of the first Kachins by an American Baptist. In 1837 that intrepid missionary traveller, Eugenio Kincaid, went as far as Mogaung, the northernmost city in Burma at that time, where he met and talked with several Kachins through a Shan interpreter. (See page 105.)

But it was nearly four decades before any actual work was undertaken among the Kachins. Brief visits to Bhamo by missionaries A. Taylor Rose, Francis Mason, and Josiah N. Cushing challenged each with the opportunity for ministry among these hill tribesmen. Each wrote to the Society's leaders urging that mission stations be opened among the Kachins without delay. Still, it was not till the arrival in Bhamo of Cushing in December of 1876 that actual efforts to bring Christianity to Kachins commenced. (See page 209.)

Though Cushing was designated for work among the Shans, there accompanied him two young Karen evangelists for missionary labors among the Kachins. These pioneers, Thra Shwe Lin and Thra Bo Gale, stayed only nine months before returning to Lower Burma. They were shortly replaced by Thra Saw Pe (S'Peh), Thra Ne Hta, and Thra Ko Te from Bassein. The latter two, along with Saw Pe's wife, accompanied Cushing with the first missionary couple assigned from America for work among the Kachins, Mr. and Mrs. Albert J. Lyon.

### **Beginnings**

Mr. and Mrs. Lyon reached Bhamo on February 13, 1878. Cushing, with the help of the Karen evangelists, had made a fair beginning in reducing the Kachin language to written form, using a combination of Burmese, Shan, and Karen characters. Tragically, within a week after his arrival at Bhamo, Lyon fell ill with a fever and within one month of his arrival as the first American missionary to the Kachins, he passed away.

Mr. James A. Freiday, replacement for J.N. Cushing, undertook to supervise the work of the Karen evangelists in the hills. Word went out in America of Lyon's death and the urgent need for an



American missionary to the Kachins. William Henry Roberts, a young pastor in Illinois, volunteered with his wife, arriving in Bhamo on January 12, 1879. Karen evangelists Maw Keh and Shwe Gyaw accompanied them from Rangoon to Bhamo. Mrs. Roberts laid down her life within a year and a half of her arrival, though her husband pioneered among the Kachins for nearly forty years. These early years were trying, with political unrest and Kachin antagonism and indifference to the appeal of the Christian gospel.

Roberts returned to America following the death of his wife, again leaving work among the Kachins to the Karen evangelists in the hills, with the assistance of Freiday. The difficulty under which they labored may be measured by a portion of Freiday's letter to the Mission Headquarters in America, dated in early 1881.

"The past year has been a very trying one for the Bhamo mission...attacks and robberies from those who it was hoped would receive the Word gladly;... and the destruction of our Shan mission house by fire, the removal of kind Sister Roberts from earth to heaven, and the return of Mr. Roberts himself to America. To these losses must be added those occasioned by the sickness and return to British Burma of valuable native helpers much needed here. These losses were easier to bear were there even a single active Christian, or even one known inquirer after the truth, to whom we might point as the fruit of all the labor of the many missionaries who have labored...in Bhamo." (*Bapt. Miss'y. Mag.* LXI, 119.)

Returning to Burma in December 1881, Mr. Roberts was married in Rangoon to Miss Alice Buell, serving at Kemmendine School. They proceeded to Bhamo with Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Cronkhite, newly appointed missionaries to the Kachins.

**First Kachins Baptized.** Only a year later, the first converts asked for baptism. A happy party, including Mr. and Mrs. Roberts and Mr. Cronkhite, trudged up the steep paths into the Kachin Hills east of Bhamo. Freiday had informed them that in the village of Bumwa, where Thra Saw Pe had been serving for over four years, several had been asking for baptism. Saw Pe and his family met the missionary party and made them at home in the village. The candidates were carefully examined; Saw Pe had instructed them well. So it was that on March 19, 1882, the first Kachins were led down into the waters of baptism. They

numbered seven in all. Bawmung La (Paw Min La), an elderly man, and his wife; his son Maran A Yung and his wife; Nangzing Yung and his wife, Lazum Kaw Lum; and finally, a deformed man named Gawlu Htang Yawng. Besides the new converts and the American missionaries, the four Karen evangelists, Maw Keh, Saw Peh, Ko Teh, and Shwe Gyaw, together with their wives, joined in the first communion service for Kachin Christians.

Development over the next several years was rapid. Baptisms were regular even though standards were high. The establishment of schools, translation of the Scriptures, preparation of a Christian hymnal and catechism in Kachin, training of new leaders, and reaching out north and south to open new stations were all part of the expanding program of this first quarter-century of Kachin Baptist Church History.

**First Schools.** Mrs. Roberts had taught a few children when she had first arrived in Bhamo. Her pupils never numbered more than a half-dozen and their attendance was quite sporadic. So the first formal Kachin school was reckoned from 1883. There were four Kachin pupils, three boys and one girl. The three boys, Dumau Naw, Hkang Htan, and Nangzing Brang Wa, all continued their studies in Rangoon Baptist College from 1887. Dumau Naw lived to a good old age and distinguished himself in every phase of Christian leadership. His name repeatedly appears in missionary reports until his death in 1950.

Early emphasis upon Bible study is evident in this period. Roberts wrote to America on June 25, 1884:

"Now that we have Christians in different villages and among different tribes, we are planning to have them all meet here twice or three times a year for instruction and to cultivate a feeling of common interest and brotherly love." (*Bapt. Miss'y. Mag.* LXIV)

This periodic Bible conference is of double significance: first, as a mark of the effort to train Kachins in understanding the Bible, and as a practice, which persists to the present, of coming together on the Association level as well as at the local parish.

**Ola Hanson for Literary Work.** Roberts and his school boys made a beginning in translating the Bible into Kachin.



He wrote home with great enthusiasm, that on August 2, 1885, he and they had completed the translation of the *Gospel According to Matthew* into Kachin, from the Burmese. However, he never conceived of himself as a translator. He repeatedly asked the Mission to recruit a scholar for this important work. Ola Hanson arrived in Rangoon to begin such work in 1890. His was the task of reducing the Kachin language to a more acceptable written form, deciding which script would be best. After careful research, he rejected the earlier efforts and decided upon Roman characters. Beginnings of word lists for a dictionary and simple rules of grammar had been made by Mason, Cushing, and Roberts. Six years after his arrival on the field, Ola Hanson wrote:

"The new Kachin hymn book containing one hundred hymns has just been finished... With the spelling book, catechism, Gospel of John, and hymn book all finished, it looks as though the Kachin literature was growing. Still, it is only a small beginning." (*Bapt. Miss'y. Mag.*)

**Period of Expansion.** Growth and outreach into new areas beyond Bhamo District characterize the last years of the nineteenth century. George J. Geis and his wife arrived in Burma in 1892. He and Roberts journeyed up the Irrawaddy River over one hundred miles to secure land for a new station at Myitkyina. There the Geises moved in 1893, happily reporting their first baptisms in 1897, three Kachins and one Burman.

South and eastward from Bhamo lay Namkham in the Shan States. Surrounding this center for Shan evangelism were hundreds of Kachin villages. Shan missionaries had been doing what they could to preach to them, but needed help. Roberts reported in 1898:

"In March we sent three of our more advanced pupils to teach school and conduct services in three villages during vacation, and to help brother Cochrane commence a work among the Kachins in the mountains east of Namkham." (*Bapt. Miss'y. Mag.* LXVIII)

By 1909, the Kachin Baptist Mission was roughly twenty-five years old. Myitkyina and Namkam established separate associations of Christian churches. In these twenty-five years several thousands in widely scattered places had heard the Christian gospel and many had responded. There were now one hundred and fifty Christians, eight of whom had been given sufficient private train-

ing to be unordained pastors. It was only a beginning, but it was good!

### **Toward Indigenization, 1900-1927.**

The second quarter-century of Kachin Baptist Mission history is characterized by indigenization. Where the story of the earlier period is one of adventure in pioneering, this era saw the establishment of self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting churches among the Kachins.

On December 15, 1901, the first ordination council convened in the Kachin Hills of Burma. The candidates had proven themselves to be called of God: Damau Naw had come as a school boy nearly twenty years before, and following his training in schools in Rangoon, had been helping Hanson in literary work since 1893. Ning Grawng had accompanied Geis since 1894 in pioneering on the Myitkyina field. Shwe So, one of the Karen missionaries, had been serving since 1884. Other ordinations followed, such as those of Zau Tu of Sinlum Kaba in 1914, Lashi Naw of Mungbaw in 1915, and Zau Mai of Mungmaw in 1919. These and others began taking over the responsibilities of the Kachin Baptist Mission formerly shouldered solely by American and Karen missionaries.

**First Lisu Christians.** Lisu (Yawyin) tribesmen have been scattered among the Kachins from the earliest times. The first converts from among them were baptized in 1902, at Myitkyina, by Geis. They were won to Christ as a result of the awakened interest of Nadu, a Lisu young woman working in the Geis home as a children's *nanny*. Her younger brother, Zau Sa, came to Christ also before long, and after training as an evangelist in the Myitkyina District, he moved to the Northern Shan States where he has served as a missionary to his own people for many years.

**Kachin Initiative and Co-operation.** Still another "first": in early 1906 Rev. Damau Naw wrote and published a small booklet. No other Kachin had ever written for publication; here was the pioneer. His theme was timely: the superiority of the Christian religion over the traditional superstitions of the Kachins. Destined to receive a wide reading and deep consideration, this first



indigenous Kachin publication was aimed at bringing Duma Naw's kinsmen to know his God and Savior.

The pioneer missionaries never dreamed of themselves as head of a Kachin church. They longed and worked for the day when they should see Kachin Christians in places of leadership throughout the church. The reader can sense something of the thrill with which J. Frank Ingram reported from the Namkham District in 1909 that they had had their own "election of church and Sunday school officers."

Other progress toward self-government was made the following year when on February 18-20, 1910, "representatives from the Myitkyina and Namkham Districts met with an immense representation from the Bhamo District, in Bhamo and there organized themselves into a Kachin Association." This was precursor of the Kachin Baptist Convention which today contains four separate district associations. Dr. D. C. Gilmore, a visiting missionary from Lower Burma, wrote of the Association in 1912 in Myitkyina:

"I was impressed with the wisdom shown by the missionaries in handling the questions brought up for discussion. The aim is to get the people to talk and to express their minds freely. The meetings were very successful in eliciting expression of the sentiments of the Kachins, pro and con." (*News From Am. Bap. Mis. in Burma*, April 1912)

Kachin partnership in the Church on a national level began in 1912 as two delegates, Kinraw Gam and Seng Li, attended the Burma Baptist Convention meetings at Moulmein to add the voice of the Kachins to this all-Burma organization. The measure of Kachin interest in this wider fellowship can be gauged by the attendance of four hundred Kachin Christians at the Mandalay Convention in 1920.

**Self-support.** Ultimately, the test of an indigenous church is its ability to pay its own way. Here again, the pioneer American missionaries to the Kachins insisted on a speedy termination of dependence on foreign funds. Hanson expressed himself strongly that a mission church should normally be self-supporting after no more than half a century. This attitude bore early fruit in the Kachin Baptist Mission. Ingram wrote home in 1916, "In our Bhamo Kachin Mission we have raised

in the country one dollar for every dollar we have received from America including even the salary of the missionary." Again he reported that at the Kachin Baptist Convention meeting in Yang-Wu held in March 1920, 500 were present and "no financial help was needed from U.S.A."

Also the strength of the indigenous Kachin Baptist Mission is seen in opening village Christian schools. Each of the three mission stations—Bhamo, Myitkyina, and Namkham—had its schools. The Kachins themselves opened many others. By 1920 such schools as Nbapa, Sinlum Kaba, and Oi Law were entirely self-supporting. The teacher-evangelists in charge were Dumau Naw, Zau Tu, Lashi Naw, and Zau Mai.

**Jubilee.** The crowning glory of the second quarter-century of the Kachin Baptist Mission was the jubilee of the work's beginning, held in Bhamo and attended by high government officials and missionaries from Lower Burma in addition to Kachins from every district. Total attendance for the four-day meetings, March 25-28, 1927, was 6,890. The Jubilee meetings' management committee, whose members were all Kachin, was headed by Zau Tu. All expenses for the meetings were paid with no debt.

During the sessions, the recently completed manuscript of the entire Kachin Bible was presented to Damau Naw for all of the Kachins, by translator Ola Hanson. With an emotion-filled voice, he said, "Here is the Book!" This gesture in itself marked the end of an era, for when Kachins had first been approached with the Christian message, they had related their tradition of a lost book that one day should be brought back to them. It had been lost because of Kachins' self-centered error in cooking and eating the leather pages. Now, in this manuscript of the Bible it was again being given to them. (Cf. the Karen tradition of the Lost book, page 68.)

The Hansons left Bhamo the following year for retirement. With a complete Bible, fourteen ordained pastors, and Christians scattered from south of Kutkai to north of Myitkyina, the Kachin Baptist Mission had become the church among the Kachins.



### The Third Quarter-Century

After the high point of the Jubilee, the third quarter-century from 1927 to 1951 was characterized by periods of temporary discouragement and testing due largely to the world-wide economic depression which resulted in decreased giving in both America and Burma. Calls for teachers and evangelists had been increasing: expansion of the work had increased more rapidly than church giving. As the depression worsened in America, missionaries were informed repeatedly that appropriations for mission work must be cut! Just one year following the Jubilee, Mr. Hanson wrote to the Secretary of the Mission Board on April 17, 1928, as follows:

"When the notice came that our appropriations would again be reduced, I put the matter before our native workers...Two things...could be done: dismiss some of the teachers and preachers, or reduce salaries. After two days of deliberation, the teachers paid by "Mission money" volunteered to have their already small pay cut in half, so as to keep all the workers on the field, and send out some new ones...In time the churches and villages will be able to take care of their preachers and evangelists. This is a move in the right direction."

**The "Triangle" is Occupied.** A new opportunity which could not be resisted, even with reduced appropriations, was the opening of the far north "Triangle" area, which had never before been under the administration of either the Burmese kings or the British. It was a stronghold of historical and traditional Kachin culture. Evangelistic tours had been made into the area from time to time by two American missionaries, Geis and Dudrow, but permanent witness had never been established. By 1929, Geis wrote that in the past two years over 4000 slaves had been set free, and four parties of evangelists touring through the district had found a warm welcome and challenging opportunity.

At the Kachin Baptist Convention held in Namkham in 1933, the possibility of sending a missionary to this Triangle area was discussed. The visiting American secretary, Dr. J. C. Robbins, regretted that it was financially impossible for the American Societies to support this venture either with personnel or funds. At this, Labya Lu (wife of Pastor Damau Naw of Nbapa) rose to

her feet and challenged the Kachin women to support a Kachin worker of the Convention's choosing. Maran Robbin, a retired government Deputy Inspector of Schools, rose to the challenge and offered his services as the Kachins' first missionary to the Sumprabum area, his support fully subscribed by the Kachins.

**Kutkai Bible School Opened.** Another decision of significance at this 1933 meeting was the establishment of a Bible School at Kutkai in the Shan States, to replace the "rainy-season" Bible classes which had been going on for many years. Missionary Geis, though due for retirement, had been asked to return to the field to set up the school. A tract of land measuring twenty-three acres was secured from the Shan *sawbwa* in the Kutkai area and work began on the new campus. Geis gave his time until the Sword family returned from furlough; he died in October 1936, a year and a half after the new buildings had been completed. (See page 231 ff.)

**Pioneer Period Ends.** With the passing of Geis, the missionary pioneer period of the Kachin Baptist Mission closed. William Henry Roberts had given thirty-five years of service, retiring to America in 1914 where he passed away five years later. Ola Hanson served from 1890 until retirement in 1928, passing away in 1929. Others had entered the service with deep dedication, but illness or transfer to another field of labor had cut short their services among the Kachins.

**War Brings Testing.** By far the worst test ever experienced by the Kachin Christians was World War II. One by one the missionaries were forced to evacuate. Station after station was abandoned and schools were closed. Rumor spread that the Japanese invaders were strongly anti-Christian. Church members scattered; some apostacized, erecting once again their traditional Animistic altars. But rumor proved to be worse than reality. Certainly, some Christians suffered at the hands of soldiers, but there were Christians also among the troops! Before long, services were being resumed throughout Kachinland. In spite of some losses in membership, new converts were won. The Shan States Association held its annual Bible Conferences; the Bhamo District Association met for fellowship and business. Life



settled down to something of a normal pattern during the years of Japanese occupation.

Though removed from Burma, the Kachin missionaries carried on their work in exile. Herman Tegenfeldt worked with Brayton Case in helping refugee Kachins to re-settle, planting gardens to insure food supplies. Misses Lucy Bonney and Mary Laughlin read proof for a re-print of the Kachin New Testament by the British and Foreign Bible Society. All waited for the day when they could return to Kachinland.

Unfortunately, contacts with soldiers in war-time brought some lowered moral standards and un-Christian habits and ideas. This was worse for the church than the cruelty of the Japanese.

**Post-War Reconstruction.** One by one the missionaries returned—Tegenfeldt, England, Misses Bonney, Taylor, and Laughlin. They returned to scenes of destruction everywhere. The investments of sixty years in buildings were gone. It was enough to discourage the most resolute, but it didn't. Rebuilding began almost immediately with much of the funds coming from abroad. Although the Kachins were destitute after the years of war, they gave freely of their time and energy.

New mission policies on schools and post-war independence for Burma created new situations for the Kachin Baptist Mission. Many of the village schools formerly aided by American funds now became government primary schools. In other places, Kachin elders pooled their meager resources and opened small schools. Salaries were paid in cash and kind to teachers willing to combine religious instruction with the three R's in small bamboo and thatch schools in remote villages. These became feeding schools for the large all-Association institutions in the three districts.

Mission grants helped the Kachin Baptist School at Myitkyina and the Roberts School at Bhamo to begin re-building their school plants and reopen classes. The Sumprabum station decided against a costly Association school, choosing instead to emphasize a co-ed Christian boarding program. Indecision plagued the Shan States Association in reviving its main mission school. It had been decided in 1941 to remove from Namkham to

Nampaka. Temporary buildings had been erected; pastor Labya De and headmaster Maran Ebbyu had made the move. School buildings and a new mission residence fitted out the station by 1949, but local financial support was not forthcoming.

**Good and Faithful Servants.** The close of this third quarter-century was marked with the celebration of the completion of fifty years of service by three stalwart Kachin leaders: Dumau Naw of Nbapa, Zau Tu of Sinlum Kaba, and Lashi Naw of Mungbaw.

Dumau Naw, the forerunner of them all, had come as a school boy in 1883. As he reached maturity, he openly professed his faith in Christ and was baptized. He obtained the highest theological training then possible in Rangoon and returned to take up the work with Dr. Hanson in translation in 1894. In 1896 he was married to Labya Lu, one of the first women students of Mrs. Roberts' school. These two dedicated and talented souls went to Nabapa, near the China border in the Bhamo District, to open new work in 1899. Damau Naw, one of the two Kachins first ordained to the Christian ministry, never wavered from his calling. His jubilee should actually have been held during the war years, then was planned in 1950, but he died before the date set.

Zau Tu and Lashi Naw were both honored in jubilee celebrations in 1952. More than 5000 relatives and friends gathered from all over Burma. There were three causes for rejoicing and thanksgiving: (1) recognition of fifty years of Christian service by these two men and their wives, (2) a farewell for Dr. and Mrs. Gustaf Sword who had served the Kachin Mission since 1921, (3) the Diamond Jubilee of the coming of Albert J. Lyon, the very first Kachin missionary appointed to the work.

Seventy-five years — beginnings, indigenization, testing. Out of it all had come a church among the Kachins, a church built on good foundations; supporting itself with its own giving; governing itself with its own decisions; and sustaining itself, generation after generation; preaching the changeless gospel of God's love for all men.



### A Decade of Development, 1952-1962.

With a relative degree of peace in the Kachin Hills area over the past ten years, there has been unparalleled progress and development. New increases have been running in the thousands, with church membership presently over 36,000. Also, indigenous leadership and self-support have increased at a rate beyond the fondest expectations. New challenges have been met. Opportunities never before encountered by Kachins, have beckoned. The results are seen everywhere in well-educated, fully-dedicated, capable and hard-working Kachins filling jobs of tremendous responsibility.

**Kachin Migration.** For centuries the Kachins had been part of a southeastward movement into Burma. As late as 1892, after the British annexed Upper Burma, few Kachins were to be found south of Bhamo. By the close of the Second World War, the largest of the four Kachin Baptist Associations was that in the Northern Shan States. About 1950, an unusual westward migration began. The Hukawng Valley, opened by the Ledo (Stilwell) Road during World War II, invited many Kachins to the fertile, uninhabited stretches of land located there. In 1951, Duwa (Chief) Hkun Hpung of Howa, near Mungbaw (Shan States) led a pilot party in settling in the valley at Tingkaw, one hundred miles west of Myitkyina. Over the next ten years, nearly ten thousand Kachins left their houses, gardens, orchards, and tea groves, in quest of flat rice-growing land in wide-open spaces. Some have made the shift successfully, but many have been swept into worse poverty than ever before. The loss to the churches in the Shan States has been an eventual gain to the Myitkyina District of which the Hukawng Valley is a part.

**New Churches.** In rebuilding, following destruction of the war, many caught a vision of more permanent construction. The first to build a stone church was Manhkrin, a village of 200 houses five miles north of Myitkyina. In a village of bamboo and thatch houses, this costly edifice witnesses to their Christian dedication. Other beautiful stone, cement block, and brick churches have been dedicated at Myitkyina, Hpawng Seng, Nampaka, and Sin-lum Kaba. Attractive wooden structures have also gone up in

dozens of villages. Most of the necessary funds has been raised locally over several years of concentrated effort.

**New Schools.** Interest in education has increased many-fold in the past ten years. Pre-war, a Kachin desiring a high school training had to attend a boarding school in Burma proper. The past decade has seen the development of three full high schools in Kachinland—Kachin Baptist School in Myitkyina (1953), Roberts School at Bhamo (1954), and the Shan States Association institution at Kutkai, National Christian Schools (both 1956). Each of these schools represents a tremendous financial investment, the Mission share being less than one-fourth the total cost. Even more important is the fact that all of the headmasters and most of the teachers are Kachins, many of them graduates of Rangoon University. The government examination results in these schools rank with those of older schools in Lower Burma.

**Theological Education.** A different facet of the gem of education among Kachins is that of advance in theological education. Lahpai Zau Yaw, fifth son of Zau Tu of Sinlum Kaba, was elected principal of the Kachin Bible School at Kutkai. Under his leadership, assisted by Donald and Jean Crider, there has been steady progress. The campus has been enlarged and buildings added; two graduates of the school, Lahtaw Gum Se and Maje La Ja, have gotten degrees from the Burma Divinity School and have joined the faculty of the Bible School. Beginning in 1959, a completely new curriculum requiring three years instead of the former two, has been introduced. The student body now averages over sixty, a further indication of popular support of the program. (See page 231.)

Altogether ten Kachin men and women have been graduated on the college level of theological training at the Divinity School in Insein. Five more are still studying there.

**Leaders at Work.** Well-trained Kachins have made possible organizational, administrative, and evangelistic progress never attained before. The Kachin Baptist Convention is now the main body for all Kachins, as a direct result of the availability of good leadership. Maran Ebbyu, formerly headmaster of the mission school at Namkham and Nampaka, served notably as the first



full-time executive secretary of the Convention for two terms of three years each. He was succeeded by Marip Awng La, one of the Divinity School graduates, who married Lahpai Nang Awn, the first Kachin woman graduate of that institution.

Other graduates of the Divinity School have become full-time Association secretaries, Isaac in Myitkyina, and Tong Si in Sumprabum. Another, Saboi Jum, serves as publications secretary for the Kachin Baptist Convention with headquarters at the church-operated Hanson Memorial Press at Myitkyina. Still another, Maran Yaw, labored for four years in Convention youth and women's work, and later joined the Bible School faculty. The important ministry of the army chaplaincy has claimed one graduate, Dingrin Brang, and the tenth, N'ngai Gam, is in charge of the Christian Center and Hostel at the northernmost governmental administrative post in Burma at Putao. Though there are presently only one family and two single ladies serving as American missionaries in the Kachin Baptist Mission, the presence of these trained and dedicated Kachins in important places throughout the Convention provides leadership far better than ever before. More than that, it makes the hope of dispensing with foreign aid in personnel a real possibility.

**Home Missions.** By far the best test of a Christian Mission's success is its ability to bring into being a missionary-minded church, demonstrated in this case by the Kachin missions to the Was, the Palaungs, and the Nagas. Before the Japanese War, the Shan States Kachin Association had sent evangelist Kareng Gam to the head-hunting Wa people to the east of the Salween River. After the war, workers were sent to the Palawngs and Shans also. Yijawng Tu, a Kachin graduate of the Bible School, fluent in Palawng, was sent to Ga Leng to establish a mission to those Buddhist tribesmen. Notable among his converts is Ai Sai, the first Palawng graduate of the Bible School, and himself now an evangelist to his own people. Still, among the approximately 250,000 Palawngs, there are less than a dozen Christians. Much still to do!

A sense of mission to non-Christians pervades the hearts of many in government service. Thus a young primary school

teacher, Lamung Bawk, posted to Namlip in the Naga Hills along the Burma-India border, communicated his interest in the primitive Naga head-hunters to the Kachin Baptist Convention, and in 1954 the Naga Mission was begun with Labwi Htingnan as the first missionary. Others have followed to establish a Kachin Baptist Mission middle school at Shingbuiyang, and outposts throughout the Naga Hills. The church among these Nagas now numbers nearly four hundred. One Naga has graduated from the Bible School and is now working as an evangelist at Nam Yong, and a second is in his middler year at the school. Though aid in this missionary endeavor has come from America, the Kachins themselves are increasingly shouldering the financial burden for the work. The challenge of the future, with confidence gained in past accomplishments, spurs every Kachin to greater dedication to Christ and His kingdom.

*Naga man and woman on Burma's northwest frontier.*





## 38 The Church in The Chin Hills

by Rev. Robert G. Johnson

IN MARCH of 1899, when the smoke of trees and grass burning to make fields for the year's crop hung like haze over the high mountains, a lonely pair of Americans made their way to Haka in the Chin Hills, a village of three hundred thatch-roofed houses and the home of the most powerful chiefs of that area. Arthur Carson was a tall and lean man, the kind of man who could, and did, build a house with his own hands. Laura Carson was stout and jolly, a maternal type who could love the unlovely. They had come to bring the healing and redeeming power of Christ to almost 250,000 people. They had been working among the Asho Chins in Thayetmyo and now came to work in the Chin Hills.

*Zomi Chins in their mountain village.*



As they penetrated farther into the hills, their hearts sank, for the Chins seemed so underprivileged that they wondered whether any gospel on earth could lift them. But they took comfort, hoping that when they reached Haka, they would find more promising material on which to work. On the fifteenth of the month they were welcomed by three British officers who kindly put them up for a few weeks in an empty stone hut, and here they saw that the Hakas, chiefs and all, were exactly like the other Chins. Before going to bed the first night, Laura wept for weariness and disappointment. "How can I possibly stay here a lifetime?" she tearfully asked. Arthur told her, "Don't talk that way. Things will look brighter in the morning." Then he added the most revealing comfort of all. "Laura, remember our motto, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.' " With that thought they went to bed and rose the next morning determined to give their lives for Christ to win the Chins.

What Arthur and Laura Carson and their Karen helper, Thra San Win, began that spring morning at the turn of the century, was to win for Christianity a large group of tribes on the border of India and Burma, in an area of 13,000 square miles of mountains, people whom time had passed by. The Chins were not cannibals nor headhunters like their cousins the Nagas to the north, nor were they savages. But they were unlettered mountain people, without money, living on a barter system, a lucky few possessing flintlock guns but many using bow and arrow, in the Iron Age to be sure but their iron implements limited to knife, axe and hoe. The Chin Hills is a remote area, far from lines of outside communication, and so separated culturally from the Burmans of the plains that to this day, sixty years later, Chins still speak of "going down to Burma."

The story of Christian missions in the Chin Hills falls into four periods. We can distinguish them as:

1. The Entering Church—the time of the pioneers, say the first ten years, to the death of Carson and arrival of Herbert Cope. 1899 to 1908.
2. The Emerging Churches—from the death of Carson to about 1924 when the young churches achieved self-support.



3. The Edification of the Churches—from 1924 to 1941, when World War II stopped missionary work. During this period the churches entered almost every part of the northern Chin Hills.
4. The Energized Churches—from 1942 to the present. This period has seen the churches, on their own, sending missionaries to every part of the Chin Hills, the perfecting of church organization, and a tremendous increase in numbers: Capable trained national leaders took over from foreigners in this period.

### I. The Entering Church. 1899 to 1908

As long as Baptist Churches endure in the Chin Hills, the names of Arthur and Laura Carson will be remembered. But from the very beginning Sgaw Karen workers from Bassein and Henzada shared with them the burdens of the work. With the Carsons came Thra San Win who became an evangelist in the Haka area. Very soon afterward came Thra Shwe Zan to work at Khawsak in the Siyin Valley, in Tiddim area, remembered as the man who persuaded the first converts, Thuam Hang and Pau Suan and their wives, to become Christians. With Thra Shwe Zan came Thra Po Ku who started teaching and preaching at Tiddim and then at Tonzang where lived the greatest chief in the northern area, also Maung Gone who started work at Laizo in the Falam district.

The third group of Karen teachers and evangelists gave a second worker in the Falam area, Thra Po Aye at Lumbang, just north of the Manipur River at a strategic spot, and three more workers for Haka area; branching out to the south, Maung Lun at Zokhua; to the west, Maung Kya at Thlantlang; and for the little school at Haka, Thra Kyi Ghine.

Meanwhile at Haka, Carson had purchased thirty acres of rolling pine woods, built a school and a house, and plans were under way for a doctor to come and minister to the appalling medical needs. In 1902 Dr. E. H. East reached the new mission station, but soon had to return to America for health reasons. He returned in 1904 with his new bride and with money to con-

struct a 20 bed mission hospital at Haka. In this year the first converts had made their decisions for Christ, but their baptism had to await Dr. East's visit to the Siyin Valley. On May 11, 1905, Dr. East baptized Thuam Hang and Pau Suan and their wives in a natural rock-bound pool in the little stream between Khawsak and Thuklai villages. Doubtless at the time the little band of Christians could not envision the scene fifty years later when over 5000 Christians were to gather at Khawsak for the jubilee of the first conversions. But in 1904, persecution for the faith was a real possibility.

The first convert in the Haka area, where the missionaries were stationed, came a few months later. In 1905, a schoolboy working in the East home, Shia Khaw, decided for Christ and on the first day of the new year he was baptized in a large artificial pond on the mission compound. In the same year, 1906, in September, Thang Tsin became the first baptized convert in the Zanniat tribe, an important group in the Falam area around Lumbang. In March of the next year the first Ngawn convert, also in Falam area, Tsong Kham by name, was baptized.

Thus after over seven years of working, Christians were baptized in all three areas of the northern Chin Hills, that is, in Tiddim, Falam, and Haka. Nothing had been done to the far south in Matu and Kanpetlet, nor in Paletwa which was to become a field of the Anglican Church; and indeed it was not until 35 years later that the Christian gospel was able to penetrate the far southern areas with a continuous ministry of evangelism.

The first period ended with the untimely death of Arthur Carson of appendicitis April 1, 1908. Dr. East buried him beneath the pine trees at Haka and covered his grave with cement in which he embedded a stone slab cut in the shape of the Chin Hills district, to symbolize that portion of earth for which this pioneer lived and died. He had lived to see one hundred converts baptized and two churches formed, a new station and hospital established, the Haka language reduced to writing, and the beginning of literary work. Mrs. Carson remained for twelve years longer and continued the work until compelled by ill health to go home in 1920.



## II. The Emerging Churches. 1908 to 1924

The missionary work was strengthened soon after Carson's death by the arrival of Herbert J. Cope and his wife in Haka a few days before Christmas in 1908. Mrs. East had had to go home to America before their arrival, and her husband had to leave because of sickness the next year, so for a year Laura Carson and the Copes only were on the field. In 1910, with the arrival of Dr. and Mrs. J. G. Woodin for the hospital in Haka to take the place of the Easts, the pattern was set for mission work for the next forty years—two mission stations. The Copes moved one hundred miles north to Tiddim and established a station in that strategic center. Thus with two stations, the Copes in Tiddim for evangelistic work, and in Haka, the Woodins for medical, and Mrs. Carson for teaching, the Good News began to spread throughout the whole Chin Hills area.

The period from the death of Carson to about 1924, when the Chin pastoral ministry became self-supporting, was a time of slowly emerging churches. The Gospel began to take root in many villages. In 1915 there were 150 Christians, and at the annual Association meeting there were 80 present. Three years later the Haka area alone had 600 baptized Christians and 8 churches, and 200 baptisms were reported in 1919 for the whole Chin area. Mrs. Carson's translation of the four Gospels and Acts appeared in 1920, and also the Haka hymnal of 126 songs. There was no attempt in this period to begin theological training in the Hills. Candidates for the ministry were sent to Insein, near Rangoon, and the first Chin graduate of the Burman Seminary finished his work in 1921.

A real disappointment during these years was the failure of the medical program. The Easts had been able to stay only one term and the Woodins also were able to give but one term of service to the Chins. Mrs. Woodin was never well in Haka, and finally in 1915 Dr. and Mrs. Woodin transferred to Bhamo, thinking that perhaps a lower altitude would suit her better. The hospital had never been popular with the Chins. Due to ignorance of modern medicine, they put their trust in the ancient system of sacrifices and propitiations to the spirits, bringing patients to the hospital only

as a last resort, and thus many died in the hospital. So, perhaps in disappointment that the medical service was not better received, no doctor was sent out to replace the Woodins. For a time the hospital limped along as a dispensary, and was closed finally in 1920. The building was used as a school until destroyed in World War II. (See page 238.)

The program of Christian schools continued and more Karen teachers came up to help, among them Thra Phe Gyi and Thra Benny for Haka, and a bit later Thra Aung Dwe for Haka, Thra Sun Tun for Falam, and Thra Sein Po, Kyaw Khin, and Thra Maung Maung for Tiddim. These Karens were more than schoolmen. They brought a definite Christian impact on their schools and villages, and were evangelists as well as teachers. Dr. Cope has said this about the Karen workers:

"We owe everything to the Karens. We do not know what we would do without them. When Mr. Carson first came up he brought three or four Karens with him and from that time on, with a few exceptions, they have proven splendid men on whom one could place no end of responsibility. For a long time they were the only evangelists here. They went out to strange villages where no preparations had been made for them and where they were threatened direly. The first Chin Christians came seven days' journey from Haka where a Henzada Karen, Thra Shwe Zan, worked alone, seeing the missionaries only once a year. The Chin preachers were put under these Karens and some of our finest workers were trained by them. They learned the language, learned the ways of the people, and won their confidence. In the first literary work I did, it was the Karens who helped me. In the school work as well we have Karen Headmasters, and they proved as valuable there as in the evangelistic work."

During this period, when Christianity was but a tender reed in strength, many of the young Christians had to meet and overcome persecution. There were many examples of superb courage. Tsong Kham, the first Ngawn convert, in Bualkhua, Falam area, was



beaten brutally and taken as a slave with his wife and children. His property, house, and farmland were taken away and confiscated by the chief. The chiefs and the upper classes of Chin society were almost universally opposed to the Christian message, perhaps sensing correctly that it meant a revolution in human relationship. The Karen evangelist, Thra Po Ku, who had been invited from Tiddim to Tonzang in 1906 by chief Hau Chin Khup in order that the chief might learn Burmese, was expelled seven years later when the old man learned that he was losing tribute. As some people under Thra Po Ku's teaching inclined toward Christianity, they gave up their drinking bouts and their animist feasts, thus reducing the amount of tribute beer and meat delivered to the chieftain. Hau Chin Khup felt it in his pocketbook. When, therefore, in 1913 some Christian young people accidentally violated the spirit altar at Tonzang, he ordered Thra Po Ku back to Tiddim.

The same chief, continuing his opposition, gathered together the village headmen and councillors of his area in 1920 and exacted an oath that "we ...the headmen, councillors and the villagers should not become Christians, nor our families, relatives and friends and even our children, generation after generation; and those who abolish this promise and become Christian should be fined 99 rupees, the cost of a mithan, a buffalo, and pot of beer." This spirit was typical of the ruling caste, up to very recent times.

A rather important step was taken in 1922 when the government, British at that time, took over the mission schools under an agreement whereby Dr. Cope became Honorary Inspector of Schools. Many of the Karen schoolmasters accepted government employment, and, while this arrangement relieved the mission of heavy expenses, it did not materially affect the Christian witness of the schools, since most of the teachers were Christians. Dr. Cope was given a generous travel allowance to enable him to visit all the schools. As he was an untiring traveller, sometimes staying on tour for three months at a stretch away from home, he had a fair income from this government source, and with the money he ran a newspaper in Tiddim for a dozen years.

In about the year 1924 — it is difficult to fix the exact date for

this sort of thing — the tithes and offerings of the Chin Christians reached the point of paying for their Chin pastors, and thus we can say that the churches had achieved self-support. This is indeed a landmark in the emergence of churches, and this date rightly ends one period and ushers in a new.

### III. The Edification Of The Churches. 1924-1942

It is unfortunate that English speaking peoples have almost dropped the word "edify" from their vocabulary. An edifice is a solid building, usually of stone or brick, and so "edification" means solidly strengthening and firmly building. This third period was a time of such building. From 1924 to World War II was a time of gathering strength and producing the two indispensable books, the New Testament and the Hymnal.

Dr. and Mrs. Chester U. Strait came to Haka in 1925 to begin two long terms of service. After first getting the language, he began a Bible School in 1928 for the training of pastors for the rapidly growing work in the south. During his second term he began New Testament translation in earnest. It was not possible to incorporate Mrs. Carson's work (the Gospels and Acts) because of changes in spelling and because he had decided to follow the Greek and English rather than the Burmese, so it was a wholly new translation. Working mostly with Saya Sang Ling, the pastor of the Haka church, he averaged ten verses a day for years, working mostly in the mornings. The finished Testament, published by the Mission Press in Rangoon, came out in 1940, just before Mr. Strait went home on regular furlough. He also enlarged the Haka hymnal to 283 songs, with a catechism in the back. It was published in 1937.

Dr. J. Herbert Cope meanwhile continued his long ministry during this third period. In all, Cope gave 30 years to the Chin mission and accomplished a spectacular amount of work. In addition to continual touring he managed to translate and publish the New Testament and the Hymnal in the Kamhau language of Tiddim (1936), and to write no fewer than 35 small textbooks in several languages for the schools. For his services, he received from the British Government in 1927, the Kaisar-I-Hind medal.



A further indication of the edification of the churches was the willingness of the Chins to accept leadership responsibility. In 1928 it was possible to withdraw the Karen evangelists and allow the Chin preachers and pastors to carry the whole load.

Dr. Cope died on June 11, 1938, at Haka while on tour. He was succeeded by Franklin and Phileda Nelson who had little more than learned the Tiddim language when the storms of war disrupted even the Chin Hills. In 1941 at Christmas the Japanese bombed Rangoon and this was followed soon by the Japanese invasion and conquest of Burma in 1942. Phileda Nelson evacuated to India in March and her husband followed in April, and thus this third period came to an end in April, 1942, with the missionaries gone from both Tiddim and Haka, and with the young Christian churches facing the unknown future without missionary leadership. But they did have the New Testament in two languages and the hymn book in five languages, and they had a body of earnest pastors and over 4000 baptized believers. And they had the resources of the Spirit of God, and thus equipped they entered into a most remarkable period of revival.

#### IV. The Energized Churches. 1942 to present.

From April 1942, to February, 1946, there was no foreign missionary present in the Chin Hills, yet it was a time of signal advance. Japanese soldiers occupied certain parts of the Chin Hills including the large villages of Haka, Falam, and Tiddim, and there was severe fighting in 1944 and 1945 in the Tiddim area when the British and Indian troops fought back into Burma. The governmental and school systems were disrupted by the Japanese, of course, but in the hundreds of tiny villages, relatively untouched by the war, life went on almost as usual. The war years revealed the solid foundation laid by the American Baptist Mission in developing national leadership and self-support, and thus during the war years the Christians continued and even much increased their zeal. In fact, deprived of foreign money and leadership, and thrown in full reliance on the Spirit, they entered into a time of revival. This period came very near to being a time of "mass conversions." From 4000 before the war they increased to 9000

at the end, and by the time of the 50th Year Jubilee celebration in Haka in 1949 the count stood at well over 18,000 baptized members. New baptisms ran over two thousand per year for ten years.

A very important event took place during the war, the beginning of mission work originated and sustained by the Chins themselves. The Thlantlang area in Haka, knowing of the needs of the Matu area to the south, sent down two evangelists, That Dun and Pa Hrek, to begin work among the Matu tribe. They encountered many difficulties but succeeded in establishing a flourishing work among a backward people who, in 1944, were much like the northern tribes had been forty years earlier. For a period of some years the Haka Association supported That Dun and Pa Hrek until finally the area was strong enough to pay its own pastors. The Zo-Matu Association was formed in 1956, only twelve years after evangelization began.

As soon as possible after the war the missionaries returned. The Nelsons came to Tiddim in February, 1946, and a new family, Robert and Elizabeth Johnson came out to Haka in May of that year. Their most pressing tasks were to see that Bibles and songbooks were reprinted to care for the great increase of Christians who desired them, and to help train the pastors better.

During the war, the great numbers of new converts made it necessary to take on more workers. Thus men were appointed "preachers" (full time un-ordained workers) and "helpers" (part time un-ordained workers on a lesser salary) who had little or no formal training, and some of whom had only a 2nd or 4th grade education. The very important task of giving these workers a Biblical foundation was undertaken by Nelson with a four-year course in Tiddim and by Johnson with a three-year course in Haka. These Bible Schools took in one large class and carried it through to graduation without taking on more students. They filled a definite need and were the predecessors of the present Zomi Baptist Theological School at Falam, which is a four-year course taught in English for the training of village pastors. (See p. 232.)

In 1948 a change took place in the method of financing the



work. For decades the pattern was for all the Christian churches to collect tithes and offerings during the year. When the Association time came in February, the money was carried to the annual meeting and counted. All pastors and other workers were paid from this common fund. It was not a Baptist way of doing things, but in the early days it was the most practical way of ensuring some sort of a fair distribution.

As the years went along, this system developed some serious flaws. Every new worker made another inroad into the treasury; hence the older pastors tended to resist the addition of workers lest their share of money be lowered. Second, the Association annual meeting tended to become more and more a place for argument as to which area was poorest and in which place the cost of living was highest, so as to adjust the salary scale to help those in difficult places. Third, some churches and some areas were suspected of withholding some of their money, giving an incorrect report to the Association. Fourth, there was a general feeling that some areas were easing down on their own contributions and expecting the richer areas to carry them along.

In order to cut down the growing disharmony, a new system was inaugurated in 1948 and worked like a charm. From that date on, each Association was responsible for salaries and pensions of its own pastors and workers. This move was called "dividing the treasury" and it resulted immediately in a spurt of larger giving in Haka and Falam areas, which had been lagging. Far from impoverishing certain pastors, as some had predicted, it almost immediately raised salaries as the Christians rose to the occasion. To care for certain special needs, such as the evangelists in Matu and in the Hualngo area of Falam, a "General Fund" was begun. Each church parish—that is, the villages under the care of one pastor—was asked to contribute 1/20th of the annual income to the General Fund in addition to a certain amount to the Association. From this practice grew up five years later the pattern for the Zomi Baptist Convention.

In 1949 the Jubilee celebrating the first fifty years of missions in the Chin Hills was held at Haka. In spite of the dislocation caused by the various insurrections which took the lives of many

Chin soldiers and cancelled plans to have down country leaders visit Haka for the event, the Jubilee was attended by over five thousand people, and during the meetings a baptismal service for 373 persons was arranged. The report that year listed 18,467 baptized members in the churches.

In 1951 both the Nelsons and the Johnsons went home on furlough. Plans were laid then to begin two new projects: a hospital in the Lumbang area and a Bible School in Tiddim. Franklin Nelson planned to conduct the Bible School under a new plan. It was to be a permanent institution, with a 4-year course, using English as the medium of instruction, and with applicants only of 6th standard, raising to 7th standard pass as soon as possible. It had been apparent for years that the churches could hope to progress only as well trained leadership was provided. As for the hospital, the mission society appointed a doctor, and plans were under way to begin as soon as he arrived.

However, the government declined to issue an entry visa for the doctor, and the plans for the hospital could not be carried out. Also, the government refused re-entry visas to the Nelsons, and so from 1953 to the present the Johnsons have been the only mission family in the area.

In anticipation of the Nelsons' return, the Bible School began in Tiddim in 1953 on schedule, with Rev. S. T. Hau Go, B.A. (Hons), M.R.E., a graduate of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, as the principal, and with a class of sixteen. Due to a heart attack, Hau Go was unable to continue the next year, so the school moved to Haka and was for five years under the leadership of the Johnsons, before moving in 1959 to Falam to a set of new buildings. At that time the school, renamed the Zomi Baptist Theological School, came under the principalship of Rev. David Van Bik, the second USA trained Chin worker. Van Bik studied in Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, California, for two years before taking this new responsibility. The School continues in Falam now with two teachers' houses and a combination classroom-hostel building. The normal enrolment is up to 25, with about one-third girls. The entrance standard has been raised to 7th pass for young men, and 7th standard fail for girls. The four-



year course is taught in English so the graduates will have access to a large body of Christian literature, and also because no one of the 45 Chin dialects is dominant outside of its comparatively small area.

This fourth period, from 1942 to the present, which has witnessed such a mass movement into the church, has also seen the perfecting of the organization of the churches. A formally organized Convention, taking in the several Associations, was the logical outcome of the "general fund" of 1948. The Chin Convention, called the Zomi Baptist Convention, ("Zo-mi" being the Chins' name for themselves), was formed in 1953 with a provisional constitution; Rev. S.T. Hau Go was elected the first General Secretary. The following year, 1954, at Khawsak very fittingly, at the Jubilee of the first converts, Thuam Hang and Pau Suan, just fifty years after the first conversions, the delegates adopted the Constitution and re-elected Hau Go for a three year term. The Convention was formed of four Associations, namely, the Tiddim Baptist Association, the Falam Baptist Association, the Haka Baptist Association, and the Kale Valley Baptist Association. An Executive Committee of 22 members was formed to care for business between the Triennial Convention meetings.

The plan was still followed of requiring all churches to contribute 1/20th of their tithes to the central organization. This has since been raised to 1/15th, as the needs of the Convention grow, especially for the support of the theological school. The money is used for evangelistic work, Bible training, women's work, and some aid to needy pastors. It should be mentioned, however, that the American churches make a grant of money to the Convention for salaries, etc., so in this respect the ZBC is subsidized. The local churches are self-supporting; it is only the overhead organization that depends on foreign help.

Hau Go served until 1957 and was then succeeded by Rev. Mang Khaw Pau, a son of first convert Thuam Hang. The General Secretary occupies a bungalow built in Falam on the Zomi Baptist Convention compound, which also houses the Theological School and the Zomi Baptist Press.

The local Associations have developed into important groups.

In addition to the original four in the Convention, four others have been added. The Zo-Matu Association joined in 1957 and the Kuki Baptist Association in 1959. Three now have full-time paid secretaries. Tiddim led the way with Kam Khaw Thang, a graduate of the Burma Divinity School, Insein, in 1957. The Haka Association chose Nun Tum in 1961, and the Falam Association chose Kyon Bil the same year. Associations have annual meetings usually in February or March, and most have smaller executive committees to carry on business during the rest of the year.

In literature production, two presses have been secured and are in operation. In Falam the Convention has the Zomi Baptist Press with one full-time worker and an 8 x 12 inch press. It publishes a monthly newsmagazine, the "Zomi Christian," and some pamphlets and books. In Haka the Association has the Deirel Press with one fulltime worker. At present this press has only a hand machine, but plans are underway to secure a larger press. It also publishes Sunday School literature and books, but no newspaper. The Tiddim Association is now in the process of securing a press also. The reason for separate Association presses is the different languages used in each area, and the difficulty of proofreading work done in Rangoon.

A beginning has been made at last on Old Testament translation. In 1959 the books of Genesis and Exodus, translated by R. G. Johnson and David Van Bik, were published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, London. At the present time these two workers are continuing the translation of the Old Testament in the Haka language, and Kam Khaw Thang, formerly secretary of the Tiddim Association, has been set apart for work on the Old Testament in the Tiddim language. E. Kyon Bill, another graduate of the Divinity School in Insein, is doing a revision of the New Testament in the Falam language.

In the field of education, the government is progressing well, but cannot yet put primary schools in every village. Baptist people are running scores of privately-financed schools. The mission has for many years helped 45 such Christian primary schools and 17 Christian middle schools. The first Christian high school



called the Zomi Baptist Academy began in Tiddim in 1958. Rev. S. T. Hau Go is the principal of this school.

The fourth period, the time of the Energized Churches, the time for leadership by the national Christians, is still with us. The 1962 reports of the churches of the Zomi Convention show 38,376 baptized believers in the Living Christ, with 556 churches, 88 ordained pastors, 68 unordained preachers, 6 women workers, 8 Associations, and a mission field—Kanpetlet. There were 2,425 new baptisms during the year.

Note: Owing to errors in the first statistical reports for 1962, the figure for church membership for the Zomi Chins was too small and for the Kachins too large. Further checking shows that the Zomi Chin Baptist group is the second largest in the Burma Baptist Convention, and the Kachin third largest. (See page 268.)

*Clearing a "Taung-yah" or temporary  
field in the mountains of Burma.*



## 39 Pa-O Baptist History

Early History by Genevieve Sowards

Later History by Rev. Mrs. William D. Hackett.

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### EARLY HISTORY

**T**HE PA-OS (in the old records called by the Burmese name for them, Taungthu or Tounghthoo) are the third largest branch of the Karens (the Sgaws being largest in numbers, the Pwos next.) They live mostly in the Southern Shan States and in the Thaton District, north of Moulmein. Like the Pwos, they have accepted Buddhism far more than the Sgaws, and this has made them usually less responsive to Christian work.

Although rapid and permanent results have been made in recent years, their history would not be complete without mention of early beginnings. Judson himself expressed concern for these people in a letter to the Mission Union in Boston in 1837, urging them to send a lady missionary to work especially among the Taungthus around Don Yahn. (Wayland: *Memoirs of Rev. Dr. Judson*, II, p. 115.)

In 1838 Judson wrote, "I have lately had the happiness of baptizing the first Tounghthoo that ever became a Christian. I hope he will be the first of a plentiful harvest." Wayland: *Memoirs of Rev. Dr. Judson*, II, p. 124.) In 1839 one Tounghthoo was reported as studying in the theological class in Moulmein. (Proceedings of Missionary Conference held in Moulmein in 1853, p. 87.)

Francis Mason wrote in 1856, "Dr. Judson baptized ten Tounghthoos, but there are none in our churches at present..."

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Although Pa-O, their own name for themselves, is much preferred, in quoting records, we will use the name quoted.



(*Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Boston, 1856, p. 452.) What had become of these ten we do not know, but the Gospel work among them did not stop.

In 1867, one of the seven preachers connected with the mission in Moulmein was a Pa-O. (Second Annual Report of the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention, 1867, page 37.)

Miss Elizabeth Lawrence wrote from Thaton in 1883, showing the concern and interest of another missionary for the Pa-o people. "I take the Tounghoos (in a Bible class)—five Christians and two non-Christians to instruct them in Burmese... When I think of the thousands of Tounghoos right here in Thaton and in villages near who know scarcely any Burmese, the only hope is for someone to give them the Gospel in their own language... if the Board does not send a family here to take up the Tounghoos, I shall try to undertake it myself."... "One Tounghoo woman was baptized, the first woman in this district—wife of a Christian Tounghoo man." (*Baptist Missionary Magazine*, December 1883, p. 427.) Truly this is a significant mile-stone.

In the establishment of schools, the Pa-Os were not forgotten. Mrs. Kelley's school in Thaton, dedicated in 1887, was "for Shans and Taungthus. (St. John: *Life of Josiah Nelson Cushing*, pp 127-128.)

In 1896 a Shan-Taungthu Church at Thaton belonged to the Tenasserim Baptist Association. (Minutes of the Mon-Burmese Tenasserim Baptist Association.)

When territory further north became open after the Third Anglo-Burmese War, missionaries moved deeply into Pa-O country. Mongnai, in the Southern Shan States was made a mission station in 1892. In 1900 Dr. Robert Harper wrote from there, "The reports of the teachers who have been jungle touring are encouraging. The Tounghthus especially are most eager to hear... short-handed... only one teacher being able to use their language." (Thirty-fifth Annual Report of the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention 1900, p. 16.) This was indeed a big field with hundreds of thousands of people of many races to be reached.

One of the missionaries who was nearest to the Pa-O people and still remembered by some of them today was Miss Emily

Payne. She wrote from Taunggyi in her mission report in 1908: "The thirty-fifth Taungthu was baptized since the year opened, and large numbers of inquirers are soon expecting to come in to be examined for baptism. Those already received live in villages from 7 to 12 miles distant from Taunggyi... work is spreading over a large area... One of the converts is fitting himself for attendance at the Theological Seminary in Insein by the study of Burmese... I have applied to the Director of Agriculture for seeds and leaflets to distribute among the people... cultivators. ... A new convert, so desirous of preaching to his people, left his fields untilled and went with the preacher... now on salary (from the mission) of 10 rupees a month. We are earnestly seeking workers to gather in this harvest and build up the Christians in their new faith. They are a timid people and would come in far greater number, were it not for fear of the Sawbwas and headmen. (Forty-third Annual Report of the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention, 1908. p. 16.) "We believe there is a great opportunity among the Tounghus in this locality and are expecting great things from God through this race. ...ripe for the Gospel message." (Forty-fourth Annual Report of the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention, p. 15-16.)

Dr. and Mrs. A.H. Henderson who came to Mongnai in 1893 and Taunggyi in 1906 considered the Pa-Os their people as much as others. They both studied the Pa-O language and Dr. Henderson wrote a book, "Family Medicine" in Pa-O, hoping to help in an area where the needs were great. With the help of his wife, he translated "part of the Bible into Taungthu." (Read, Katherine: *Bamboo Hospital*, pp. 209-211.)

The Hendersons always welcomed Pa-O visitors to their retired home in Taunggyi. One Pa-O went back to his village, telling his people the wonders of the house and the love he met there. "I am sure that this is what Heaven will be like," he said. In 1910 there was a Taungthu church in Pegu District. (*Burma News* March 1941, p. 35.)



## Later Pa-O Baptist History

by Rev. Mrs. William D. Hackett

**T**HREE men reached their camp on the edge of Mongnai town about dark of a short January day in the early 1900's. Working together with the silent deftness born of long companionship, two of them removed the clumsy wooden saddle frames from the pack oxen, and released them to graze. They stacked the frames beside the sturdy freight baskets which fitted onto them, and covered them against the dew which would be falling soon. Meanwhile the third man had kindled a fire and cooked rice—fragrant Shan rice, white as clouds, a treat to those hill men. As they hunkered round the fire to eat, they glanced at each other, and Eng Ta, the cook, said, "Where is that MawPwang? Doesn't he know we want to leave Mongnai before sunup?"

*Pa-O traders in camp.*



Maw Sein Kha, a younger man, replied, "Yes, he knows. He'll be along. He has a new friend in the bazaar, and he wanted to stay and talk with him a little while. We can leave some rice for him. He's probably coming right now."

But the stars were out before Maw Pwang turned up. No one spoke while he bolted his rice, and drank a tiny cup of tea— now tepid and bitter. At last Maw Sein Kha ventured,

"Did you see your new friend ? "

"Yes, I saw him."

"He is a stranger here ? What is his work ? "

"He is a stranger, a Karen. Thra Bla Paw, his name is. And he came here to bring us a new religion."

There were astonished exclamations and questions from men who, fifteen minutes before, could hardly keep their eyes open. "How could he come to us, when he doesn't even know us ? " "What makes him think we want a new religion ? We are followers of the Enlightened One, not spirit worshippers; why should he come to us ? " "What new religion ? "

Maw Pwang said slowly, " I can remember, when I was small, hearing my grandfather tell one of our old Pa-O stories. It was something about how the ancestors of all the Karen tribes were brothers, and each had a book. And the youngest brother was white, and he took his book and went far away to live. And the older brothers lost their books, but some day the white brother will come back, and bring his book, and share it with them."

The others nodded. The folk story, common to most Karen tribes, was dim and hazy among the Pa-O, who had accepted Buddhism several hundred years before. (See p. 305.) Still, it had not died altogether, and they could remember hearing it. Maw Sein Kha prodded again. "And so ? "

"Well, Thra Bla Paw says the white younger brother has come back, and brought his book to share with us. There are already a good many Sons of the White Book down country, and now they come to tell us hill people. This new religion is in the White Book, and I can't understand it at all."

"But you're an educated man," Eng Ta protested. "You can



read. Wouldn't this Thra show you his book ? ”

“Yes, he showed it to me. But I can read only Pa-O and Burmese, not Karen. He tried to tell me, but I couldn't understand. Something about a God, and His son, who died, and therefore there isn't any Karma any more. No, that isn't right. I said to him, I would tell my cousin-brothers, and if you agreed, we would all come and hear him, next time we are in Mongnai.”

Before dawn the next morning, the oxen were rounded up and loaded, another hasty meal gulped down, and the freighters were on their way up the steep trails to Taunggyi and Pareh, their home village. Eight days that climb took, the weather growing cooler every day. It was good to be home with their families, to hear their own language spoken all around them, to rest and talk and joke with their friends.

Nevertheless, they did not stay home long. They went down the mountain trails on the other side, to Pyawbwe, at that time the closest rail point, for another load of the kerosene and betel nuts, salt and dried fish, which could be sold for such excellent profits in Mongnai bazaar. During each stay in Mongnai, they spent less of their spare time in teashops, and more with Thra Bla Paw, trying to understand the strange new religion of the White Book.

Hill people do not reach major decisions quickly, and devout Buddhists are seldom in a hurry to change their religion. Moreover the women are even more conservative than the men—and these four relayed Thra Bla Paw's teachings and explanations to their wives. All things considered, it is rather remarkable that by January of 1906 four couples were ready for baptism, the first eight Pa-O men and women to become the disciples of the Lord Jesus in this area.

It took real courage for the eight shivering new Christians to brave immersion in the icy waters of February in the hills, and the sullen stares of their neighbours—and still greater danger. The Sawbwa, ruling prince of the area, heard of the baptisms and sternly ordered the Christians to be banished within three days. Family and tribal ties are very strong among Pa-O people, and banishment is terrible punishment. Frightened and sad, the new

Christians called on a missionary then resident in Taunggyi, a Miss Emily Payne. She wrote a letter to the angry prince which must have been a masterpiece. At any rate, he relented and rescinded the banishment order.

Rejoicing in their deliverance, the Christians established their first Pa-O churches in this area, one in Pareh and one in Loi-kawng, in February, 1906. A school came next, as they realized how much they wanted their children to be educated in Christian ways. In 1912, the British and Foreign Bible Society published the first Pa-O Gospel of Mark, and the other Gospels appeared at intervals during the next twenty years. Another church was established at Ga-Nun-Shay. Karen preachers toured the area, baptizing and preaching. Thra William Ko Lay in particular will long be remembered by Pa-O villagers for his patient work in building up their churches.

Early in the 30's, Saya U Ba Te, famous for his evangelistic work in a score of hill tribes, realized with a shock that the Pa-O people had no hymnal. To all good Karen Christians, the hymnal is second to the Bible. With the help of a Pa-O Bible woman, Sayama Ma Ngwe, he prepared and Baptist Publications published a little collection of a hundred hymns.

There were three large Christian schools in Taunggyi, in each of which Pa-O children, graduates of the village primary schools, were doing good work. Some of them were even going on for higher education, for teachers' training, for nurses' training, and for theological training at the Burmese Seminary in Insein.

In early 1906, Dr. Henderson established the Ani-tha-thana, the Taunggyi Home Mission Society. For forty years this Society has supervised and strengthened evangelistic and other Christian work in the Taunggyi area, receiving monthly contributions from all the churches and applying them to salaries of workers or other special needs.

Much concerned about this lack of a full time Pa-O missionary, Mrs. Heptonstall, missionary widow and an invalid retired in Taunggyi, challenged young William Hackett, son of A.B.M. missionaries in Moulmein, to return to the United States for theological and mission training, and then to go to the Pa-O people



as their own missionary. He and his wife arrived in Taunggyi for their first term of service in December 1941 to work among the Pa-Os.

When the Hacketts returned immediately after the war, it was as area missionaries, assigned to nine language groups in the Shan State and Kayah and to rural church development programs throughout Burma, leaving only a little time for work in Pa-O villages.

The Rural Christian Center at Pang T'Kwa, where the Hacketts live, five miles from Taunggyi, has been for ten years a pilot project for rural church development programs in Burma. Pang T'Kwa Church was organized in 1951. Pigs and chickens from Pang T'Kwa demonstration farm were adopted into many Pa-O villages, where they earned their keep and made friends for their sponsors. Pang T'Kwa school now takes its students through Seventh Standard. Its headmistress is the first Pa-O woman to receive an academic degree, Sayama Mary Khin Maung Phyu, granddaughter of Eng Ta, one of the first converts in this area, mentioned above. The Pang T'Kwa Dispensary, too, has been fortunate in its staff, a succession of dedicated and capable Karen Christian nurses.

The Christian literature which must form the base of any considerable evangelistic advance among the Pa-O people has been helped by Mrs. Hackett. Committees of preachers and teachers have translated fourteen books of the New Testament, of which eight have been published. Translation work continues, and it is hoped that a complete New Testament may be published in another five to ten years. Committees have revised and expanded the little hymnal, and added responsive readings. They have prepared literacy materials, tracts, a First Standard Reader.

Thus the turbulent last twenty years have not been wasted. During World War II, many town Christians fled to the Pa-O villages, and there formed warm friendships which have strengthened Christian work ever since. And though the poverty and tension and insurrections of the postwar years have made village evangelization almost impossible, still a number of steps have been taken in the right direction. Christmas festivals held every year in each Christian village attract hundreds of our Buddhist

neighbours. Christian workers are welcomed and respected in any Pa-O village they wish to enter. Two new preaching stations have been set up—one near Pang T’Kwa and one beyond Loikawng. In short, during these years necessary working materials have been put together, and firm friendships carefully built up. The next decade or two may see significant evangelistic advance.

Probably the major problem of Christian work among the Pa-O is that of personnel. One reason why Pa-O translation work is so painfully slow is that the only first-draft translator is also the only Pa-O typist. The failure, to date, of any major efforts in literacy work has been caused in part by the lack of trained, enthusiastic young workers eager to introduce their fellow Pa-O into the joys of reading. More rural Christian centers like Pang T’Kwa would be welcomed—if they could be staffed.

We should be rejoicing in the fruits of Christian work among the Pa-O people, and in the encouraging signs of more plentiful harvest in the years to come.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Since the writing of the above account, a very significant event has taken place. In April, 1962, at the Southern Shan States Association, held in Loikawng village, four people were ordained, each of a different race: Thra Ba Sein, Karen, head of the Shan State Bible School; Saya Elia, Black Karen, pastor of the only black Karen Baptist Church; Saya Ba Aye, Pa-O evangelistic worker; and Mrs. Marion Hackett, American missionary, Bible translator. The communion service which followed the ordination, served by the newly ordained people, was truly a deep experience in multi-racial Christian fellowship.

This is the first time a missionary woman has been ordained by an indigenous group in Burma, probably the only woman ordained in Burma.



## 40 Work Among Lahus, Was, Akhas

by Rev. Saw Aung Din and Rev. E.E. Sowards

**N**OTE: Rev. Saw Aung Din studied in Judson College and the Burma Divinity School, and worked on the Kengtung field 1941-1957. Then he became Superintendent of the Northern Lahu-Wa field for the Burma Baptist Convention, with headquarters at Lashio.

In preparing this chapter, in addition to Thra Aung Din's good summary and other sources, use has been made of three typed manuscripts: a *History of the Kengtung Mission* written in 1927 by Rev. J.H. Telford, Dr. Wallace St. John's *The Baptist Investment in Burma*, and *A Short Historical Account of the First Evangelistic Lahus pausing on way to bazaar*.



*Work Among the Lahus in Kengtung Area*, an English translation of a paper written by Lahu Leaders of Kengtung in their own language. This contains more names of early converts than any other source available to us.

**The Land and the People.** Most of the Lahus, Was, and Akhas live in the mountainous region east of the Salween River in Burma and Yunnan, China. In Burma, this section was long called the Eastern Shan States; this name is still in common usage. In this land of steep mountains, deep valleys, and swift streams, not enough rice is grown to supply the population and food has to be brought in. But the opium poppy grows well here, and since it brings in such a good income and can be easily transported, opium has been the main cash crop. Its production and use raise many moral and economic problems.

There are few roads, some narrow trails, and the steep slopes and swift torrents make communications difficult. A few large villages have the fifth-day bazaars usual in the Shan State, and are the places of residence of local rulers.

The Shans are the dominant race, living in the valleys, and the Shan Sawbwaws have for centuries been the rulers and still exercise considerable influence although their feudal powers are being taken over by the central government. Baptist mission work among the Shans of this region is dealt with in chapters 22 and 36.

**The Lahus.** Lahus, called Muhsos by the Shans, live in villages scattered throughout the Eastern Shan States, and now there are Lahu villages west of the Salween in the Lashio region. More Lahus live in China than in Burma, and some in Thailand. Their villages tend to be small, and may be moved after two or three years when fields on the steep slopes become too eroded. Thus it is difficult to build strong village churches and schools, as a village may break up into smaller units when it moves. (cf. No. 2 on page 113.)

The Lahus are divided into two main groups, the Black Lahus and the Gold Lahus (Lahu-na and Lahu-shi), with some smaller divisions and sub-dialects.

**The Was.** The Wa States are in the central part of the Eastern Shan States, and many Was (pronounced Wahz) live across the



border in China. Wa villages are usually larger and more permanent than Lahu villages. Wa and Lahu villages may be scattered through the same area, and Lahu Christians took Christianity to the Was. Another name for this people is Awa.

The Tai-loi (Mountain Shans) and the Black Karens are really branches of the Wa family, though their names sound otherwise.

**The Akhas.** Kengtung State is the home of most of the Akhas, also called Kaws and Ekaws, a sturdy mountain people whose villages are usually built at a lower altitude than the Lahu villages. Their religion is a mixture of animism and ancestor-worship, and they have a complicated culture which is breaking down under the impact of modern life. The Akhas have been much less responsive to the Gospel than the Lahus and Was, but after years of persistent effort, progress is being made.

**Contacts with Hill Peoples.** Chapter 36 and page 208 tell about Dr. Cushing's visit to Kengtung in 1870 and the opening of the mission station in 1901 by Rev. William M. Young. In Mr. Young's report to the Convention in 1901-02 he said:

"We preach three out of five days in the bazaar in the city...Large numbers of hill people come in and stop over night...come from one to several days' journey. Those meetings have been quite encouraging and attention good... Work should be carried on as vigorously as possible among the hill people here. They are very friendly and no doubt will be much more accessible to the Gospel than the Buddhists."

**Lahu Traditions and Prophecies.** Lahus, like Karens, had old traditions and prophecies which prepared them for the coming of the Gospel. One popular prophet, A Teh Pu Cu, taught:... "We may not see God, no matter how we search for Him now. But, when the time is fulfilled, God will search for us and will enter our homes. There is a sign and when it appears, we will know that God is coming. The sign is that white people on white horses will bring us the Scriptures of God..."

Rev. Young was a white man, and wore the white cotton clothing common to Westerners in Burma in those days. He brought the Bible, the Scriptures of God. Thus the Lahus saw the fulfillment of their prophecies, and were inclined to accept the new religion.

**First Lahu and Wa Converts.** Response from the Lahus and Was did not come at once. News of the white religious teacher spread through the hills. Ca Sheh Pu Tao (Ca is pronounced like Jah) was a Lahu judo expert who came to Kengtung to demonstrate his ability before the British officials. He came to Rev. Young, and after long discussions decided to become a Christian, the first Lahu convert, baptized Oct. 30, 1904. Soon after his return to his village, others accepted his preaching, and soon the first Lahu village church was built. He and his wife Nang Tee moved to Kengtung and served as evangelists for many years.

Eh Yeh was a popular Lahu "prophet" in the large village of Ven-bo about seven miles from Kengtung. When he heard of Ca Sheh Pu Tao's conversion, he and many followers went to Kengtung and expressed the desire to become Christians.

Li Kaw-eh Mee was a powerful Lahu chief with a numerous following. He was a great admirer of Eh Yeh and came to Ven-  
*Wa hunters bring home proof of their success.*





bo to pay his respects to him. To his amazement he found that Eh Yeh had become a Christian, and he too soon accepted Christianity, and urged his followers to do likewise. Soon the conversion of the Lahus was proceeding at an accelerating pace.

The above were largely from the Lahu-na group. The first Lahu-shi convert was Ai Hkan Law, and the first Wa Christian was Ai Yone Hpa. Unfortunately, the dates are not known.

**Rev. Young's Vigorous Program.** Rev. Young was no man to lose an evangelistic opportunity. Rev. Telford wrote of him: (After the first conversions,) "More extensive tours among the Lahus were immediately made by the missionary and his helpers... Converts were sent to invite Lahus to gather in mass meetings (in Kengtung)... Five hundred Lahus came (at one time) from about one hundred villages... Most of these visitors were baptized and returned to their villages. ... Delegates of Lahus from across the border in Yunnan, China, came to inquire about the new religious teaching. ... (also) a delegation of the Wa tribe..."

**Beginning of a "Mass Movement."** In the annual reports to the Burma Baptist Convention, Mr. Young reported 1,046 baptisms for 1904-05 and 4,419 baptisms for 1905-06.

Reports of such large numbers of baptisms caused mixed reactions in the mission. Dr. A.H. Henderson, a veteran Shan missionary, and Rev. C. H. Heptonstall, a Karen missionary, were sent to Kengtung to investigate.

One attitude was that these thousands who were willing to declare themselves Christians and were asking for baptism should be baptized. Training in the Christian life could be given afterwards as opportunity came. The large numbers of baptisms made attractive reports to churches in U.S.A. and large specific gifts were soon sent to help "gather in the harvest."

The other view-point was that "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded. ." is equal to baptizing in the Great Commission. Most missionaries followed the policy of having candidates for baptism wait till they had proved their understanding of Christianity and evidenced changed lives—some as long as two years. In Tavoy they had to learn to read. (1955 Torbet 64.)

**Difficulties of an Educational Program.** It is not easy to appreciate the tremendous obstacles met with in setting up an adequate system of educating thousands of new Christians. Neither the Lahu nor Wa language had been reduced to writing. A great deal of painstaking study and hard work is required to reduce a language to writing and translate the books required for schools and churches. Unfortunately the Mission (now spread over all of Burma) had no men available to give Christian literature to the Lahus and Was as Jonathan Wade and Francis Mason had done for the Karens, and no press turning out millions of pages in Lahu and Wa as Cephas Bennett had done for the Karens at Tavoy.

Rev. Young recognized the need for education. In 1925 he wrote, "The educational work is of vital importance on this field... Our greatest need is for better trained workers." Rev. R.B. Buker wrote of Rev. Young in *Burma News* May 1936, pp. 76 ff: "Mr. Young was literally a pioneer. He pushed back the frontiers of Baptist Mission work to cover an area of 100,000 square miles... carried on almost single-handed." Travel in these mountains is slow and most difficult.

**Lack of Desire for Education.** In addition to other difficulties, new Lahu and Wa Christians showed little inclination for education. What Rev. Antisdell wrote in 1908 continued applicable: "Local workers (should be trained) to care for these thousands who have been baptized...but the people have not taken advantage of the education offered." For instance, in 1928 only 919 pupils were in 16 schools from a total church membership of 24,759.

**The Rapid Growth in Numbers** of baptisms was not limited to a few years only. Reported baptisms per year were more than 4,000 in 1906, 1926, 1928, and 1931. There were around 2,000 or more in 1907, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1927 and nearly 2,000 in 1932. The total church membership reported in 1936 was 33,650. Well over one-half of these were in China.

**"Ruined Christians."** In view of the large numbers baptized and the lack of trained workers to teach the new converts, it is no wonder that many reverted to the old ways. These "ruined



Christians," as they were called by evangelistic workers, were much harder to reach later than those who had not once accepted the Christian faith. Rev. Telford wrote of these:

"The conservation of the newly won converts was really a greater task than their evangelization...almost insuperable difficulties...Considering every circumstance relating to the conversion of the Lahus and Was, the wonder is not that some of them proved recreant to their trust, but that[so many of them... remain true to their faith in Christ."

**New Stations Opened.** When Rev. J.H. Telford took over the Kengtung field in 1916, Rev. Young was free to open up new work. Bana in China, about eight days' journey from Kengtung, was opened in 1920 and became the main center for the work across the border.

Pangwai, about sixteen miles southeast of Kengtung and at a much higher altitude, was opened in 1925 as a center for the work among hill peoples of Kengtung State. Pangwai's 300 acres give ample space for agricultural experiment and demonstration.

Mong Mong, about seven days' journey north of Bana, was opened in 1927 as a second station in China. Later as missionary personnel decreased, it became an out-station of Bana.

Pangyang, in the Burma Shan State of Manglun, was opened in 1935 as a center from which to work among the Was on the Burma side of the border. Communication with the outside world is through Lashio.

**Other Missionaries.** In addition to the two sons of Rev. Young, Rev. Telford, and the Buker twins, several other missionaries have helped in the Lahu-Wa work. Rev. and Mrs. C. B. Antisdell and his sister Mary gave six years of service, 1906-1912. He was the first missionary to learn the Lahu language. (Rev. Young used Shan for his early work with the Lahus.) Rev. H.H. Tilbe worked in Kengtung 1906-1907, and did much of the reducing of Lahu to writing. Rev. A. C. Hanna, a grandson of Judson, worked in Kengtung 1916-1919 and helped materially in the publishing of Lahu Christian literature.

Rev. W. M. Young left Burma for retirement in March 1932 and died in 1936. His sons, born and reared in Burma, continued the work, Rev. and Mrs. Vincent Young from Bana and Rev.

and Mrs. Harold Young from Pangyang. Rev. Telford at Pangwai developed the central boarding school for the Kengtung Lahu-Wa field, and promoted the twenty village schools. Some years he taught a Bible class for evangelistic workers, to build up the local leader-ship in the fifty churches of his field. In 1936 the church membership of the Lahu-Wa fields was reported to be 33,650. More than half of these were in China.

**National Workers.** Karen workers from Lower Burma played an important part in the development of Christian work here. (See page 318.)

Saya Ba Te, a successful lawyer, gave up his practice to help in the Christian work on the far frontiers—Kayah, Kengtung, and across the border in China. He spoke eight languages fluently, and composed hymns in several. Thra Po Tun did much translation from Burmese and Karen into Lahu. Scores of other workers whose names have not been recorded in history have helped to advance the work of Christ in the remote borders of the Eastern Shan States and in China—"Unknown Soldiers" of the Gospel.

**Earlier Literary Work.** Readers and hymn books were the early publications in Lahu. Before Rev. Hanna left Kengtung in 1919 an improved reader and a greatly improved hymn book with about 300 hymns were printed. Saya Ba Te and Thra Po Tun were the chief translators. Thra Po Tun's translation of the New Testament, revised by Rev. Telford, was published in sections, starting with Mark and Acts, and it was not until 1932 that the complete New Testament was available to Lahu Christians.

Rev. Vincent Young worked in the Wa Language, and with Wa helpers translated the New Testament published in 1938.

The total amount of Christian literature in both Lahu and Wa was very small, and the low literacy and poverty of the average church member made distribution about as great a problem as publication. But slow progress was being made when World War II brought calamity to Burma.

**War Halts Progress.** In 1942 when the war came to Burma, all missionaries were evacuated, and funds from abroad were completely cut off. The Japanese gave Kengtung State to Thai-



land, and communications with Burma almost ceased. Supplies of printed matter from Rangoon became unavailable. Life became difficult for Lahu and Wa Christians, suspected of being pro-American because of the former connections with American missionaries.

**Post-War Difficulties.** Of the five missionary families stationed on the Kengtung-Pangwai-Bana-Pangyang fields before the war, only Rev. and Mrs. Vincent Young returned to mission work after peace came. They went to Bana and began the rehabilitation of the great fields in China.

No missionary family was available for the stations in Burma until Rev. and Mrs. Paul W. Lewis arrived in Pangwai in 1947. Both had unusual linguistic and literary abilities which they put to use in the aspect of the work most needed to supplement earlier work.

**Loss of the China Fields.** When the Communists gained control of China, Western missionaries had to leave all of China, and Bana was evacuated on very short notice. A number of Christian Lahu and Wa workers also made their way to Burma. Contact with thousands of Christians on the Mong Mong and Bana fields in Yunnan was lost. With no reports coming in, the churches and members in China had to be dropped from the Burma Baptist Convention statistics, but prayers continue for them. (See page 268.)

**The KMT Problem.** As the Communist government in Peking took over active control of Yunnan, several thousand defeated troops of Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek's Nationalist (Kuo Ming Tang) army crossed the unguarded border into Burma most of them into Kengtung State. Although supplied by air from Formosa with essential military supplies, their food had to come largely from a region that has never produced more than its own population needs. When the Burma Army began military operations to drive out the KMT's, the Lahu, Wa, and Shan villagers were caught between the two forces, and for several years life was difficult. The Christian work suffered serious hindrances under such unfavorable conditions.

The KMT troops in Burma caused international complications, and finally by the co-operation of Burma, Thailand, the Nationalist Chinese Government of Formosa, and the United States of America, most of the KMT force were evacuated to Formosa. But hundreds of local men had been recruited, and KMT soldiers had married local women; these did not want to go to Formosa and continued their depredations in Burma, supported largely by the illicit traffic in opium. KMT remnants, combined with local dacoits, have continued to be a problem in much of the Lahu-Wa fields.

**Rebuilding in Kengtung.** Rev. Vincent Young had had experience in building under frontier conditions, and after the evacuation from Bana to Kengtung he supervised the rebuilding of the church, hospital, and residence there. The Vincent Youngs went on furlough in 1955 and were refused re-entry visas and so could not return. However he has kept contact with the work by air mail, and is still able to use his extensive knowledge of the local languages for translation. A book of Old Testament stories in Wa is a valuable addition to the scanty Christian literature in Wa.

**On the Pangwai Field.** Rev. and Mrs. Lewis acquired a working knowledge of the Lahu language and devoted themselves to the spiritual growth of the thousands of baptized church members on the Pangwai field. They emphasized the "...teaching them to observe..." part of the Great Commission, and hold that "Christians" must maintain high standards of character and conduct. They prepared teaching materials in Lahu, worked on literacy programs, held conferences for workers and laymen, and stressed the development of Christian attitudes and character. To those brought up in the pioneer years of the work, this may seem to overemphasize the educational at the expense of the evangelistic, but these two phases should be complementary, not antagonistic, as both are necessary to the progress of the church. The most unfortunate aspect has been the division of the churches on the basis of personal loyalties.

**Orthography Controversy.** For some years several Pangwai leaders advocated a change in the spelling of Lahu words, but



these changes were opposed by the other group. Various committees were sent up by the Burma Baptist Convention, but no fully satisfactory solution was found. Two separate Lahu hymn books were published, one by the Pangwai group and another by the Kengtung group.

**Lahu New Testament.** With the co-operation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, a committee headed by Rev. Lewis made a new translation of the Lahu New Testament, referring to the Greek, and the books became available in 1963. The Bible Society reported that "...sales are greatly exceeding expectations."

**Pangwai Bible School.** Both Rev. Young and Rev. Telford conducted Bible Training classes for evangelistic workers and pastors, but usually for short periods only. The last several years the Pangwai Bible School has been in operation for Lahu, Wa, and Akha workers and their wives, giving longer courses and a wider range of class and field work than was formerly available in this area. The graduates are helping greatly to strengthen the churches. A firm foundation for future growth is being laid.

### **The Lahu-Wa Work in 1961-1962**

**The Pangwai Baptist Conference of Churches** is composed of 8,337 members in 130 congregations from eight different hill tribes and sub-tribes—another instance of area co-operation instead of racial division. The General Secretary, Sala Yohan, is fluent in Lahu, Kachin, Akha, Shan, and Burmese. In spite of difficult and dangerous communications because of dacoits and insurgents, the Christian work goes steadily forward and the growth is on a solid foundation. Baptisms the past year numbered about 400. The boarding school at Pangwai serves the whole field.

**The Kengtung Lahu Association** reported 1,952 members in 40 congregations, and 301 baptisms. The Kengtung Baptist School has Shan, Lahu, and other pupils from the many different language groups living in the town.

**The Northern Lahu-Wa Field.** In 1961-62 the Northern Lahu-Wa Field reported 6,483 members in 113 congregations and 418 baptisms. The field at present consists of the Panglong Lahu-

Wa Association, Mongmao Wa Association, Manlun Lahu-Wa Association, and Hsenwi Lahu Association, with Rev. Yawnathan, Rev. Yawsu, Sala Maung Ba Thein Chang, and Rev. Thra U Ba Tun assuming secretarial duties, respectively. Hsenwi area alone, among the four, lies to the west of the Salween River. There is a central Christian boarding school in each of the first three areas where there are so far no State schools.

**National Leaders.** One of the finest Christians is Sala Ai Pun, Lahu, who sacrificially left a job as headmaster of the school in Pangwai to become travelling pastor of 16 widely-scattered leprosy villages (1600 patients). Nearly blind and diabetic, he walks steep mountain trails in dangerous areas to minister to these needy people. The lepers have their own Association of churches, and last year Ai Pun baptized 210 new converts. The children of Sala Ai Pun and Sala Ma I Bo are in various schools seeking good education. Enoch is in Divinity School.

Rev. Ai Pluik, recently deceased, was a Wa pastor for 30 years both in China and Burma. Amid hardships and dangers, he worked to lead, teach, and evangelize. At one time in 1961 he *Akhas in their mountain home.*





and field missionary Thra Aung Din baptized 325 Was who had been carefully instructed over a period of time.

**Summary.** The total for the Lahu-Wa fields reported for 1961-1962 was 20,203. Baptisms were just over 900. This makes them the fourth largest Baptist group in Burma, after the Karens, Zomi Chins, and Kachins. And there are probably more than 15,000 Lahu and Wa Christians across the border in China who are not included in the Burma statistics, but who should not be forgotten.

### Work Among Akhas

While the Lahus and Was have responded by thousands, only hundreds of Akhas have been won, although they are about as numerous in Kengtung State as the Lahus. In the Annual Reports of the Burma Baptist Convention, Rev. Young in 1907 reported tours among Akhas. In 1908 six Akhas were in school. In 1909 Rev. Antidel reported some Christians among the Akhas: "The Christians among them show slow but steady progress. There are very few cases of falling away." Sala Hkan Blake was the first Akha convert.

**The First Akha Baptist Church** was organized in April 1936 in the village of Pang Hki Het as the result of the patient work of Thra Tun Gyaw and his wife for ten years. There are now about twenty Akha Baptist churches, and Akha members in other churches.

Rev. Paul Lewis and his wife Elaine are giving much attention to the Akha work. They studied the complex Akha language and in 1955 put out a duplicated translation of the Gospel of Mark. After the translation of the New Testament into Lahu was completed, they began work on an Akha New Testament, and hope to have it completed by about 1967.

**Akhas in the New Age.** The Akha culture and religion are breaking up under the impact of the forces of change which reach even to their remote mountain villages. Young Akhas are not learning the complicated rituals necessary to keep alive the old customs. The 100,000 Akhas present a great challenge to the Christian churches of Burma.

## 41 Burma Baptist Missionary Fellowship

By Rev. E.E. Sowards

**T**HE organization of the American Baptist Burma Mission began when the Houghs, the first reinforcements, came to join the two Judsons on October 15, 1816. In a letter dated November 7, 1816 Judson and Hough sent to the Board a copy of the Articles of Agreement which formed the basis of the new mission (Wayland, Vol. I. pp. 182-185). With only a few missionaries in one station, there was little need for a formal organization and annual meetings until the number increased, scattered from Mergui to Akyab and Ava.

The first formal conference was held in Moulmein in 1836 when the Board sent out the Rev. Howard Malcolm to visit the mission fields and report back home. Again in 1853 the Board sent out a Deputation of two members, and a six-week conference was held in Moulmein which had important results, not all advantageous to the mission work, unfortunately. (See pages 144 ff.)

Twelve years later in 1865 the Burma Baptist Missionary Convention was organized, and its annual meetings gave opportunity for missionaries and national leaders to meet in fellowship, and to consider problems together. The meetings of the Convention were held in Burmese and Karen, and for the first few years evening meetings of missionaries were arranged in English in homes, and actions taken there were included in the Convention minutes. The desire to emphasize the Convention, and fear of making a wrong impression, prevented the formation of a separate Missionary Conference for years. But in 1887 the Convention was held in Moulmein, and because of limited transportation facilities, quite a number of missionaries had to be in Moulmein several days long-



er than the Convention, and so they held devotional meetings. These proved so inspiring that it was voted to hold another such gathering the following year just before Convention.

For years these meetings were only devotional and inspirational, but gradually some mission business crept in, and in 1898 the Missionary Conference was formally organized with a constitution. Chapter 27 has given the development of the various committees of the Conference, and the transfer to the Convention.

### Work of Missionaries En Route to Burma

The history would not be complete without mention of the influence of missionaries upon the crews and passengers on ships to and from Burma. Before the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, sailing ships required from four to five months to make the long voyage from the United States to Burma. Even now steamers coming through the Suez Canal take about a month from England to Rangoon. Thus in 150 years the 794 missionaries who have worked in Burma have spent a total time of many years on shipboard.

In 1841 Judson sailed from Calcutta to Mauritius and on to Moulmein on the ship *Ramsay*. On arrival at Moulmein the Captain, first officer, and two members of the crew were baptized and the whole crew greatly affected for the better. (Wayland, II, pp. 181-186). In 1860, on the *R. B. Forbes* bringing the Van Meters and other missionaries to Burma, the whole crew, from captain to cabin-boy, with the exception of two, were converted. (Carpenter, *Self-support in Bassein*, p. 301). There can be no accurate evaluation of worship services and personal contacts on shipboard, but many have been brought closer to Christ.

### Turning over Responsibility to the Convention

**Observers Invited.** In order to prepare national leaders for taking over the responsibility for the Christian work in Burma, leaders of the Burma Baptist Convention and of the language groups were invited to attend quarterly meetings of the Mission Executive Committee and the Annual Meeting of the Missionary Conference. They took part in discussion and usually responded frankly when their opinions were requested.

**Joint Meetings.** In 1956 the next step was taken by having joint meetings of the two Executive Committees of the Burma Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Burma Mission. The first regularly scheduled Joint Meeting was held July 14-17, 1956, the second in October, and the third in January. Chairmen of the two Committees presided alternately in the Joint Meeting sessions. At first, votes were entered separately in two sets of minutes and listed as either EC or BEC votes, that is, votes of the Executive Committee of the ABBM or the BBC. Then votes at Joint Meetings were listed separately as JEC actions, and were considered actions of both committees.

One Executive Committee. In January 1958 the Burma Baptist Convention was recognized by the Boards of the two American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies as being the responsible field body for Baptist work in Burma. The churches of Burma had "come of age," an important step toward the realization of the missionary goal of establishing self-supporting, self-directing, self-propagating Christian churches in Burma.

**End of the American Baptist Burma Mission.** Now the American Baptist Mission came to an end. In 1958 the Missionary Conference adopted a new constitution which is in keeping with the new situation. For many years the Missionary Conference had been an organization parallel with the Burma Baptist Convention but not a part of it. The new constitution of the Burma Baptist Missionary Fellowship recognizes the Burma Baptist Convention as the over-all Baptist organization in Burma, and the Missionary Fellowship is one of the several language group organizations of which the Convention is composed. All questions dealing with the Christian work in Burma are now dealt with by the Convention. The annual meetings of the Fellowship are for inspiration and fellowship, and for a minimum of business not relating to the general work. Missionaries in isolated stations for most of the year, where they may seldom see one of their own race or hear their own language, welcome a week of fellowship with their co-workers and the opportunity to "re-charge spiritual batteries."

The Fellowship deals only with those questions which are connected with the missionary as an individual, his family, his per-



sonal and spiritual needs, the education of missionary children, health, and relations to churches and Baptist organizations in America. The time that missionaries spend in writing letters, sending pictures, writing for publication to keep American Baptists interested in mission work bears fruit in American giving. Also many missionaries at home on furlough spend strenuous months speaking in American churches.

**The Spirit of the Transfer.** As one who held the key position of Mission Secretary and then Field Secretary through the years of transition, from early 1952 to late 1961, the writer wishes to pay sincere tribute to the fine spirit of co-operation and consideration for the best interests of the Christian work with which the transfer of responsibility has been made. It was not a case of insistence upon "rights and powers" of the national churches and reluctant concessions by the Mission. Speaking generally, missionaries were willing to give over responsibilities more rapidly than national leaders felt themselves qualified to receive, but all recognized that the time made quick advance advisable. Often missionaries have been "assistant" to a national "director" and worked happily together, even though Americans tend to be more individualistic and expect to work at a faster pace. The educational standards for missionaries have continued to be higher than for similar work in the United States or Burma, and advanced study on furlough is usual.

It is significant that when the Executive Committee of the Convention was recognized as the responsible field body, they immediately invited the Executive (later, Reference) Committee of the Mission (later, Fellowship) to meet with them the first year "to give us the benefit of your experience and knowledge of the work." And in the records, the first vote of the Convention Executive Committee, after transfer, was request for twenty-two new missionaries. In these five years since transfer, the spirit of co-operation has not decreased, and it has been a joy to see how the members of the Convention Executive Committee have risen to new responsibilities and have grown in many ways. As one who has worked closely with national leaders for years, I am glad to testify that I firmly believe Christian work in Burma is in good hands; we face the future with faith and hope.

## 42 The Unfinished Task

By Rev. Erville E. Sowards

**T**HE general theme for the celebration of the Judson Sesquicentennial is twofold: *Thanksgiving* for the accomplishments of the past and for the lives and work of all those who have helped to make these possible; and *Consecration* for the greater tasks yet ahead. The preceding chapters have given a condensed account of these accomplishments of the past. There is indeed cause for sincere thanksgiving for the many thousands of devoted Christians who have worked and witnessed through the past 150 years, and who have set examples worthy of being followed in the future. This closing chapter will take a glimpse of the tasks ahead for the Baptists of Burma. For convenience the subject will be considered in three sections.

### 1. The Task Within The Church

The tasks facing the Baptist churches of Burma within their own membership will be dealt with more extensively in the final section of *Our Baptist Heritage* study material for 1963, printed in Burmese for general distribution to the churches.

Among the tasks considered are these: bringing members who are "born Christians" to personal commitment to Christ, promoting continued spiritual growth, maintaining contact with non-resident members, developing local lay leadership, in-service training of under-trained pastors, providing Christian literature, promoting brotherhood and greater co-operation among the different language groups within the Burma Baptist Convention and with regional and world Christian bodies. These tasks deserve and will require the fullest consecration of time, talent, and life.



## 2. The Task In Burma

Although the tasks given above could easily take up their full time and strength, Baptist churches of Burma must not forget their major responsibility: to witness for Christ to those around them. A church so engrossed with its own problems that it neglects this primary purpose of its existence is on the way to spiritual death. The words of Christ in Matthew 16:25 are as true for a church as for an individual: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." The spiritual re-vitalization of a church and its members should make all more active in evangelizing the community.

As we look back over the past 150 years and then face the future, there is cause for both hope and concern.

In 1813 the two Judsons faced the task of evangelizing perhaps 7,000,000 people, or even as many as 9,000,000.

In 1913 after a hundred years of Christian work, the 65,000 Baptist church members of Burma faced the task of evangelizing about 12,000,000 people.

In 1963 about 215,000 Baptist church members face the task of evangelizing nearly 20,000,000 people in Burma.

There is cause for hope in the fact that in the last fifty years the number of church members has more than tripled while the general population has not quite doubled.

There is cause for concern when we realize that even after 150 years of work, we face the task of winning almost three times as many people as lived in Burma when the Judsons came.

The task of evangelizing Burma may be considered in sections, by the main language groups.

**Burmese, Mons, Shans.** These three staunch Buddhist groups have hardly been touched by the Christian Gospel in spite of the efforts of devoted missionary and national workers. Yet there have been results, and although progress is painfully slow, the record shows that such work is not in vain. Most certainly Burma will not be Christian until these great groups comprising well over three-fourths of the people of Burma, are won.

**The Karens.** In popular thought Karen and Christian may be closely connected, but the fact is that probably not over 15% of

Karens are Christian, including all denominations. The Pwos and Pa-Os are almost as strongly Buddhist as the Burmese and Mons. We thank God for the devoted Karen Christians, but must not regard the task of evangelizing the Karens as finished.

**Asho Chins.** Many problems beset the widely-scattered Asho Chin Christians, but a good beginning has been made in evangelizing them. More trained leadership, more Christian literature, and more co-operation at various levels will be required to help the Asho Christians meet their opportunities for Christian witness.

**Zomi Chins.** In the Chin Hills, Baptist churches face the difficult tasks of consolidating the very rapid growth of the past few decades, raising the literacy of members, producing a great amount of Christian literature in several dialects, training many new leaders, and promoting the spirit of co-operation. And despite the large numbers already in the churches, the great majority of the Zomi Chins are yet to be won for Christ.

**Kachins, Lisus, Nagas.** A solid foundation has been laid, the rate of growth is good, and future prospects are bright, but much remains to be done. Planning, prayer, and work will be required for the continued progress of Christ's Kingdom in northern Burma among these half million or more people.

**Lahus, Was, Akhas.** The tasks facing the churches in eastern Burma are much the same as those in the Chin Hills, complicated by insecurity and insurgency. Consolidation of rapid gains, and the raising of levels of literacy, economic life, and spiritual development are some of the most pressing problems facing the Lahu and Wa Christians. Work for the Akhas is in an earlier stage, and needs to be pressed vigorously to reach these numerous people in this time of rapid change and crumbling of the old culture.

**Black Karens.** For about sixty years there has been a single Black Karen Baptist church in the Loilem area where there are about 300 Black Karen villages. Here indeed is a challenge!

**Palaung.** Sometimes called "The Forgotten People," about 150,000 Palaungs live in the Shan State. Kachin and Shan Christians have done some work among them, but only a small beginning has been made. Much evangelistic and literary work is yet to be done.



**Other Groups.** There are still many groups in Burma to be reached more effectively by the Gospel: the immigrant Indians and Chinese and their children, Tai-Lois, Inthas, Mawkens or Sea Gypsies, and others. In some, as the Mawkens, beginnings were made years ago but progress has been slow. In others, as the Inthas, a beginning has yet to be made. To make the motto "Burma for Christ" a reality, full consecration will be required.

### 3. "Into All The World"

Christian responsibility and Christian concern are not limited by national boundaries. Christ's command to witness for Him even "to the uttermost parts of the earth" apply to Burma Baptists just as to other Christians. The church of Christ in Burma will not come to its full stature until Burma Christians assume their share of the world responsibility of the Christian witness. Christian Karens in Burma have long been interested in evangelistic work among the Karens in Thailand, and Burma Christians have occasionally contributed to emergency relief aid for victims of flood or storm in neighbouring countries. But this is only a beginning, and Christians of Burma must have continuous concern for the world mission of Christ's church and be willing to work, give, and pray for its realization.

Thus the tasks of the future within the church, in Burma and in the world, present a challenge worthy of our highest effort in the service of Him who gave all for us and for the world. The *Chronicle* of Baptist work in Burma records a good beginning, but only a beginning, of the development and growth of the Church of Christ in this land.

## EPILOGUE

The **Burma Baptist Chronicle** must close, but the history of Burma Baptists will go on. The account of facts and incidents in this book can give only a faint picture of the courage of early converts from many language groups in breaking with old customs and accepting a new way of life. The evangelistic zeal of many hundreds of workers who have taken the Good News of Christ's love from the islands of Mergui to the snow-capped mountains of the north can only be mentioned. The faithful and devoted service of thousands of pastors, teachers, doctors, nurses, printers, farmers, and other Christian workers cannot be treated adequately in cold print. The integrity and daily witness of Christians from humble villages to high Government offices who have tried to share with others their joy and peace in Christ can not be portrayed in suitable terms. But all have added to the rich heritage of Burma Baptists.

From 1813 to 1963 a total of 794 Baptist missionaries have served or are serving in Burma. These have come from almost every section of the United States, and from Canada, the West Indies, New Zealand, and several European countries, yet all have indeed been laborers together for God. Many thousands of national workers from every major language group in Burma have had significant parts in the growth of the church of Christ in this beautiful land. Others have withstood opposition, even to making the supreme sacrifice, in full loyalty to the new-found Saviour.

Burma Baptists look back over the past 150 years and say with sincere thanksgiving: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." They look forward in faith and confidence to the years yet to come, and say: "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

The promises of God are sure; may our dedication to His service be worthy of those whose deeds have been recounted in these pages of the *Burma Baptist Chronicle*.



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In the story of the church in the preceding pages, many individuals have not been mentioned by name. The authors feel, however, that they must list the following:

| ABFMS                                | Place of Service                    | Date of Service      |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Allen, Rev. and Mrs. Bradley,        | Immanuel Baptist Church Rangoon     | 1961-present         |
| Braisted, Rev. and Mrs. Paul,        | Judson College and Chapel           | 1927-1933            |
| Brown, Rev. and Mrs. Russell,        | Immanuel Baptist Church             | 1951-1960            |
| Combs, Rev. and Mrs. Milton A.       | Young people's work BBC             | 1957-present         |
| Cross, Rev. and Mrs. E.B.            | Tavoy and Toungoo                   | 1944-1905            |
| Crumb, Rev. and Mrs. A.V.B.          | Toungoo Paku Karens                 | 1879-1924            |
| Currier, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond P.     | Judson College                      | 1913-1923            |
| Eden, Dr. and Mrs. Frank E.          | Immanuel Baptist Church             | 1929-1934            |
| Gilson, Rev. and Mrs. Clifford,      | BBC Christian Education             | 1961-present         |
| Hackett, Rev. and Mrs. Paul R.       | Rangoon, Maubin, Moulmein           | 1913-1942            |
| Harris, Rev. and Mrs. E. N.,         | Shwegyin, Toungoo, Kalaw            | 1893-1931            |
| Josif, Rev. and Mrs. George D.       | Rangoon Burman, Mission Secy.       | 1920-1940            |
| Journey, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J.      | A.B.M. Press                        | 1927-1933            |
| Keyser, Rev. and Mrs. Walter L.      | Bassein, Toungoo,                   | 1928-1946            |
| Latta, Rev. and Mrs. J.T.            | Thonze                              | 1905-1940            |
| Morrow, Rev. and Mrs. Horatio,       | Tavoy Karen                         | 1877-1905            |
| Money, Mr. and Mrs. J.B.             | A.B.M. Press 1907-1914:             | 1931-1926            |
| Parish, Rev. and Mrs. M.C.           | Pegu Burmese                        | 1907-1941            |
| Phelps, Rev. and Mrs. A.C.           | Henzada Karen                       | 1906-1942            |
| Rogers, Rev. and Mrs. Lewis B.       | Toungoo Burman                      | 1907-1939            |
| Streeter, Rev. and Mrs. Merrick L.,  | Tavoy Burmese                       | 1910-1941            |
| Sutton, Rev. and Mrs. Walter D.,     | Tavoy Karen                         | 1920-1961            |
| Weeks, Rev. and Mrs. Adoniram Judson | Tavoy, Moulmein, Karen              | 1905-1939            |
| Woodbury, Rev. and Mrs. N.E.         | Myitkyina and Bhamo Kachin          | 1919-1934            |
| <b>WABFMS</b>                        |                                     |                      |
| Anderson, Gertrude                   | Karen, Chin, Burmese, Kachin        | 1920-1941            |
| Craft, Julia G.                      | Kemmendine, Maymyo                  | 1896-1952            |
| <del>Crain, Kate</del>               | <del>Henzada, Thonze, Toungoo</del> | <del>1928-1942</del> |
| Crooks, Frances                      | Bassein Burmese                     | 1905-1934            |
| Davis, Ida                           | Meiktila, Prome, Tavoy              | 1920-1934            |
| Eastman, Harriet N.                  | Rangoon, Toungoo, Karen             | 1872-1930            |
| Finney, Nona G. (Rausch)             | Moulmein, Bassein Pwo, Maubin       | 1917-1932            |
| Good, Helen N.                       | Moulmein. Died 1944.                | 1908-1940            |
| Hatch, Faith                         | Moulmein, Pegu, Taunggyi            | 1921-1942            |
| Hastings, Olive                      | Rangoon                             | 1919-1940            |
| Hesseltine, Carrie E.                | Maubin, Moulmein, Prome, Toungoo    | 1918-1954            |
| Johnson, Mrs. Jennie Bixby,          | Toungoo, Loikaw, Taunggyi           | 1886-1942            |
| Lucas, Nellie                        | Moulmein, Toungoo, Pegu, others     | 1909-1935            |
| Maine, Grace                         | Toungoo Bwe                         | 1926-1939            |
| Mosier, Mildred                      | Moulmein                            | 1915-1936            |
| Parish, Mary                         | Pegu Burmese                        | 1907-1942            |
| Pennington, Grace                    | Bassein Sgaw Karen                  | 1911-1923            |
| Philips, Mary E.                     | Rangoon Burmese                     | 1918-1930            |
| Prince, Annie L.                     | Moulmein                            | 1916-1930            |
| Ragon, Stella                        | Bhamo, several stations             | 1898-1935            |
| Sutherland, Margaret M.              | Bhamo, Kemmendine                   | 1897-1926            |
| Tingley, Clara B.                    | Bassein Sgaw Karen                  | 1904-1940            |
| Tufts, Helen L.                      | Bassein, Sagaing, Moulmein          | 1921-1953            |
| Watson, Isabella                     | Henzada, Bassein, Papun Karen       | 1867-1906            |
| Whitehead, Agnes                     | Moulmein, Taunggyi                  | 1884-1936            |

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NOTES: (1) **Place names** are capitalized for easy recognition.

(2) **Name of Burma nationals** are alphabetized according to the first letter of the Burman name. If a title such as *Maung*, *Ko*, or *U* is used with the name, then the name will be listed under that title.

(3) **American Baptist missionaries** are listed under the headings *Baptist Missionaries, families, and Baptist Missionaries, women of WABFMS.*

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Published for the Baptist Board of Publications  
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Published for the Baptist Board of Publications  
 143 St. John's Road, Rangoon  
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